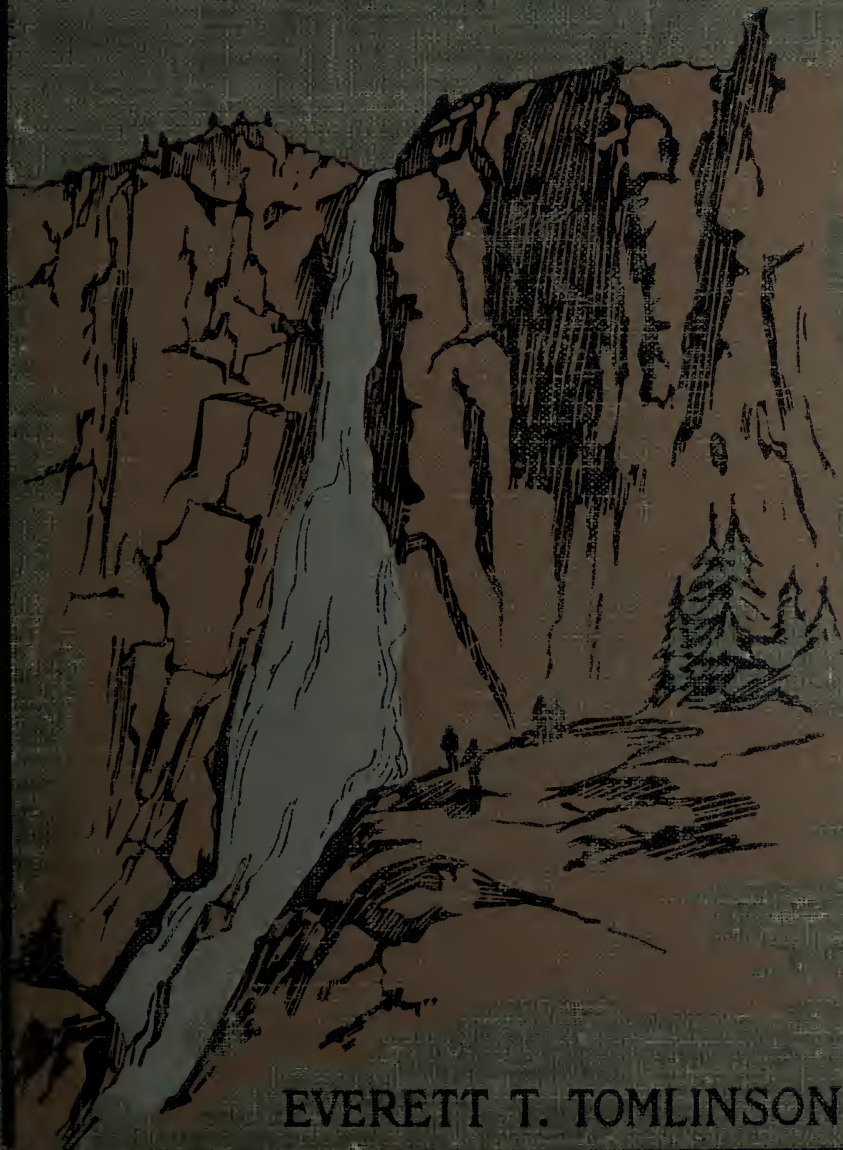


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BOYS IN THE YOSEMITE



EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

M. J. G. Jr





FOUR BOYS IN THE YOSEMITE



FOR A FEW MINUTES THEY REMAINED STANDING IN SILENCE.

Page 210.

FOUR BOYS IN THE YOSEMITE

BY
EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

AUTHOR OF
FOUR BOYS IN THE LAND OF COTTON, FOUR
BOYS IN THE YELLOWSTONE, FOUR BOYS
ON PIKE'S PEAK, FOUR BOYS AND
A FORTUNE, FOUR BOYS
ON THE MISSISSIPPI, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE A. NEWMAN



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FOUR BOYS IN THE YOSEMITE

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MAIN

PREFACE

At a time when Americans are traveling abroad as they never have before, it is not inopportune to call attention to some of the wonders and glories of America. The towering ranges of mountains, the majestic waterfalls, the broad plains, and prosperous cities of our own land are well worthy of the visits of all who are in love with travel. Best of all, they are our own. "See America first" is an appeal not merely to a sentiment of patriotism, but also is based upon many things that are true—especially true in the realm of natural scenery. A man who has recently returned from a trip around the world said that, in all his journeyings, he found nothing to compare with the sublimity, impressiveness, and beauty of the Yosemite Valley.

Many do not realize the advantages which the nation has provided in setting apart great "parks," such as the Yosemite and the Yellowstone, for the benefit of the people. They are ours, and foreign travelers seldom fail to visit

them when they come to our land. Americans ought not to do less. The true appreciation of our country cannot be had merely by listening to the descriptive words of others.

This book, as the reader at once will see, is not a book of travels, but is rather the *story* of the travels of four boys. It requires slight knowledge of live American boys to understand that, when they visit such a place as the Yosemite Valley, they will discover many things not described in the guidebooks, and will have many experiences unlike those of their elders. Many of the incidents incorporated in this tale actually occurred. The foremost purpose of the writer has been not only to interest his young readers in the doings of four boys, but also to inspire within them a desire and a purpose to see with their own eyes some of the marvelous possessions of America. Intelligent patriotism must be based upon knowledge, and "seeing is believing."

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ON THE TRAIN	9
II. AN UNEXPECTED STOP	21
III. THE EXCITEMENT AMONG THE PASSENGERS	33
IV. ACROSS THE CONTINENT	45
V. THE INTERVIEW	57
VI. AN AUTOMOBILE	69
VII. THE START FOR THE YOSEMITE	81
VIII. THE OCCUPANT OF UPPER SEVEN	95
IX. AN EVASIVE TRAVELER	107
X. COACHING	120
XI. INTO THE VALLEY	132
XII. THE SENTINEL	143
XIII. AN INTERRUPTED QUOTATION	155
XIV. IN THE TORRENT	167
XV. INVESTIGATING	179
XVI. THE BURIAL OF THE INDIAN	191
XVII. UNDER THE FALLS	204
XVIII. A NIGHT LETTER	216
XIX. THE ASCENT	228
XX. THE TRAIL	241
XXI. THE CLIMB	253

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. A MESSENGER	266
XXIII. THE YOSEMITE CHIEFTAIN	278
XXIV. TO CLOUD'S REST	291
XXV. THE DISCOVERY IN THE CAÑON	303
XXVI. COACHING AGAIN	315
XXVII. A MOUNTAIN LION	327
XXVIII. THE ROAD IN THE FOREST	340
XXIX. WAWONA	352
XXX. JOHN'S BEAR	364
XXXI. AMONG THE BIG TREES	376
XXXII. CONCLUSION	389

FOUR BOYS IN THE YOSEMITE

CHAPTER I

ON THE TRAIN

“WHAT does this mean?” demanded Larcum Brown, as soon as he and his three friends had seated themselves in the dining-car of the train which was swiftly bearing the four boys toward San Francisco, now not more than thirty miles away.

“What does what mean?” responded Lee Harris lightly.

“Listen to this, fellows,” continued Larcum, ignoring his friend’s question and reading from the card which he found on the table before him. “‘ Bean soup, one dollar; Mexican beef, prime cut, a dollar and a half; beef, up long, one dollar and a half; beef with one potato, fair size, a dollar and a quarter; tame beef, from the States, a dollar fifty; baked beans, plain, are seventy-five cents; and baked beans,

greased, are a dollar.' Now, what do you think of that? "

"What are you talking about, Larc?" demanded John Adams Field, Jr., who was familiarly known to his friends as "Jack."

"I thought the price of beans would bring a response from our learned companion from Boston," laughed Scott Gordon. "I'll tell you, Jack," he added, turning to his friend as he spoke, "what you'll have to do. You give an order for three beans and a potato skin. That will be enough to remind you of home and mother, anyway."

"I'm not done yet," broke in Larcum, still holding in his hand the card from which he was reading. "Here are some of the entrées. Perhaps they'll suit you better: Sauerkraut is only a dollar, fried bacon is the same price; hash, 'low grade,' is seventy-five cents; and hash, 'eighteen karat,' is dealt out at the trifling sum of one dollar. No, hold on! Here's what Jack craves," he added lightly. "Here's the 'game,' codfish balls, double, at seventy-five——"

"Cents or dollars?" interrupted Lee, with a laugh.

"Cents, of course," replied Larcum demurely. "What did you think? Then, if cod-

fish is too far from its native air or lair, you can have a grizzly roast for a dollar, or grizzly fried for a quarter less. Ah, here we have it: here's a whole jackass rabbit for only a hundred cents. One order ought to be enough for all of us."

"Any pastry, Larc?" inquired Scott soberly.

"There certainly is," answered Larcum. "Rice pudding, plain, can be had for the trifling sum of three-quarters of a dollar; but, if you want it served with molasses, it will cost you a quarter more. With brandied peaches, the price is still one dollar higher. Here we have what we've been looking for—'square meal with dessert, price, three dollars.' How does that strike you?"

"I know where it strikes me," said Scott. "I'd have neither the heart nor the pocket for much of that bill of fare. What are you doing, anyway, Larc? What is that you are reading?"

"Hold on a minute," responded Larcum, as he clung to the card he was holding. "It says here, 'Everything is payable in advance,' and that 'Gold scales can be found at the end of the bar.'"

“What is that card?” asked John, once more.

“This card is a souvenir—a reproduction of a bill of fare at the El Dorando Hotel, Placerville, Cal. It was in use in the good old days when the '49 gold excitement was the prevailing distemper. The railroad people have printed this card as a souvenir, which I intend to take home with me and keep for our party.”

“More likely it's a reprint to make us feel a little more easy in our minds when we face the prices of to-day. What does ‘gold scales at the end of the bar’ mean?”

“They were doubtless used in weighing the gold-dust of the miners,” explained John. “You know, the miners didn't have much money—they usually paid in gold-dust in those days.”

“I know an old gentleman in New York,” said Scott, “who took a schooner full of onions around Cape Horn in the time of the excitement over the discovery of gold in California——”

“Onions!” interrupted Lee. “What in the world possessed him that he wanted to take a whole cargo of onions out there? Why, if he had taken pickaxes, or——”

“He knew what he was about,” retorted

Scott, breaking in upon his friend. "He knew the miners would be suffering from scurvy, and that onions would be in demand. He sold out every onion he had at twenty-five cents apiece. He never did a stroke of work after that."

"Why not?" demanded Lee.

"Had all the money he wanted," explained Scott.

"That was blood money," said John sharply.

"I suspect it might have been a bit tainted, Jack," laughed Scott. "But, then, compared with some of your New England cargoes of Jamaica rum or slaves stolen off the coast of Africa, it wasn't so bad."

"Now, see here, Scott Gordon," began John sharply, "you know just as well as I do that——"

"I know I'm hungry," broke in Scott. "What I want is my breakfast. I've been rolling around all night in that upper berth——"

"And kept it up till morning, if the blasts from upper seven were any indications of your occupation," declared Lee.

"Why didn't you wake me? Why didn't you call me down?"

"Because you weren't up."

“ Why didn't you call me up? ”

“ Because you weren't down.”

“ Quit that,” growled Larcum. “ Here, how will this do for an order for our breakfast? ” he added, and read aloud from the slip of paper on which he had been busily writing.

“ It's all right, Larc,” said Scott, without looking at the order. “ After a man has had five nights on a sleeper, he's ready to take almost anything ‘ unsight, unseen.’ I'll trust you.”

As the other boys quickly agreed, the order was given by Larcum to the waiter, and the boys settled back in their seats to await the preparation of the breakfast which Larcum had selected for the four.

While they are waiting, with such patience as they possess, we can take a hasty glance at the quartet. Several years before the time when this story opens, the four boys had been classmates in a famous preparatory school in New England. Larcum Brown, sometimes called “ Cupid,” and more commonly known as “ Larc,” was the giant of the band. On the football field his fame was great, for his huge size and immense strength had served the school in more than one apparently hopeless

plight. Wearied of college, at the end of his freshman year he had withdrawn, to enter the offices of the T. G. & P. Railroad, a corporation of which his father was a vice-president. Larcum's home was in Chicago.

John Adams Field, Jr., the "Jack" of the party, was from Boston. In scholarship, he easily outstripped his friends, leading his class in the preparatory school, and now, after three years in college, winning a place in the front rank of his college class. And yet Jack was not "bookish," for his love of sport and of travel had already become manifest to his companions.

The third member of the party, Lee Harris, was from the South. Tall, slender, dark of hair and eyes, his gracious ways had made him one of the most popular students in college, although his warmest and most intimate friends were those that were with him at this time.

Scott Gordon's home was in New York. Not so studious as Jack, nor so athletic as Larcum, he yet stood high in scholarship and games. His well-knit, muscular frame was indicative of his continued good spirits, and the complaint which he had made of his quarters in the sleep-

ing-car was looked upon as more or less of a joke by his companions, who were aware of Scott's propensity to sleep "standing, walking, reciting, on horseback, or on foot," as Lee laughingly described his friend's tendency.

In preceding summers the four boys had made journeys together,¹ and now they were all together again for one of their enjoyable trips.

This time their destination was to be the wonderful Yosemite Valley, in California. On this morning, when we find them seated about a table in the dining-car, their long journey of five days across the continent is almost at an end. San Francisco is less than thirty miles distant. Not one of these boys has ever seen the Pacific Ocean, and, although every day of their long journey has had its own interesting experiences, their keenest interest has been aroused by the thought that they now were near their journey's end.

"Too bad I couldn't get away a little longer," said Larcum, while waiting for their breakfast. "As far as I am concerned, I

¹See "Four Boys in the Yellowstone," "Four Boys in the Land of Cotton," "Four Boys on the Mississippi," and "Four Boys and a Fortune."

might have managed it, but it isn't quite fair to the T. G. & P."

"What salary do you have now, Larc?" asked Lee.

"I've risen from the ranks of the more humble toilers. I started in at six per——"

"If we don't know it, the fault isn't yours," broke in Scott.

"I started in at the humble stipend of six per," resumed Larcum, ignoring the interruption, "and now I——"

"Didn't your father suggest that that was just six dollars a week more than you were worth?" demanded Scott.

"A man's father sometimes is prejudiced. Still, as I look back to my humble beginning, I realize there was a measure of truth in his remark. But not long, sir; not long. Soon that mighty corporation rose to its privilege, and I was made the proud recipient of seven per. To-day I have an office boy that I can boss! Sometimes I even dictate a letter. I'm no longer afraid of the porter, and there are times when strangers even dare to address me as 'mister.'"

"They must be strangers—strange, stranger, strangest," suggested Scott.

“What are your wages now, Larc?” inquired John.

“My salary is twelve per—an increase of one hundred per cent. in three years.”

“Services doubled in value, too?”

“Modesty forbids me to enter into details,” retorted Larcum. “Scott,” he added abruptly, as for the first time he caught sight of a card pinned to the vest of his friend, “what’s that label you have put on yourself?”

“That isn’t a label—that’s just a card of explanation,” replied Scott soberly. “I’ve placed it there on my vest so that, if we should by any chance have an accident, the surgeons would be saved a good deal of trouble and I should be saved a big bill of expense.”

“What is the warning, anyway?” continued Larcum, as he leaned toward his friend, and then read aloud: “‘I am not suffering from appendicitis! I have been in a railroad wreck! My appendix has already been cut out three times. Twice since the last operation I have been told that I was threatened with appendicitis. I don’t know who has my appendix now, but, if you want to cut it up or cut it out, you will have to find its present owner. I decline, with thanks, all your offers to remove it from

me. This is just a plain, ordinary case of accident and must be treated as such.' ”

“ What in the world made you do that? ” demanded Lee, as Scott’s three friends laughed loudly.

“ Well,” began Scott, in mock seriousness, “ one never can tell, and it pays to be on the safe side. I don’t mind a few operations, but I don’t want to get the habit.”

“ You stand about as good a chance of being operated on for appendicitis as you do of being scalped by the Indians,” laughed John.

“ Well, the Indians are becoming civilized and adding all the modern improvements,” said Scott. “ I was reading in the paper only yesterday that Dog Soldier’s wife, Josephine, wanted a divorce from her husband, because she recovered from an illness which her spouse thought would prove fatal and let him take the widow of Mr. James Bull Tail as his future helpmeet.”

“ I saw that item of news, too,” laughed John, “ only the story I read was that James Bull Tail was suffering from exposure that came to him because Mistress Bull Tail beat and kicked him out of her tepee.”

“ Never mind! Here comes our breakfast, boys! ” exclaimed Larcum, as the dusky waiter was seen approaching, skillfully balancing his tray above his head, and apparently unmindful of the swaying of the train.

CHAPTER II

AN UNEXPECTED STOP

THE welcome that the waiter received caused the shining face of the negro to glow, and visions of his expected tip were already before him. For a few minutes none of the boys spoke, so intent were they all upon the food that had been served. Such a condition, however, could not long continue, and Lee, looking up from his plate, said: "Larc, did you hear what Scott said to that beggar that hailed him near the station in Chicago?"

"No. What did Scott say?" responded Larcum, without looking up from his plate.

"It was a one-legged man that stopped Scott. He had the regulation whine, and, as soon as he saw us, he thought we would be easy. He looked at Scott as if he thought he was his long-lost son, and began to cry. 'If you please,' he whined, 'I've lost me leg——' Scott didn't wait for him to say it all, for he stopped short and inquired anxiously, 'You say you've

lost your leg?' 'Indeed, I have, me young friend,' moaned the beggar, who was a professional and knew his trade. 'That's too bad,' Scott went on. 'I'm quite likely to lose things myself. Do you want us to help you find it?' The beggar looked at Scott a minute as if he didn't know just what to say, but Scott's face was so gentle in its expression that he took courage. 'Yis,' he began again, 'I've lost me leg.' 'So you told us,' said Scott. 'We haven't very much time, for we must take another train, but, if we can help you look for it, we'll be glad to do it. Have you any idea where you lost it?' The old fellow's face began to get red then—at least, it got a bit redder than it was before—and I thought he was going to lay hands on our gentle friend from New York. He changed his mind all at once, however; and, almost weeping, began again, 'Yis, young gentleman, I lost me leg.' 'You look at me as if you thought I had it,' said Scott, in that mournful, reproachful tone of his that brings us all to him. You know what I mean, don't you? "

"I should say we did know," broke in Larcum warmly.

"Of course we know, but the old beggar

man apparently didn't, for he glared at Scott and then growled, 'I'm tellin' yez I lost me leg.' 'And I'm telling you,' said Scott softly, 'that I haven't got it. Your tones seem to imply that you have a suspicion of my personal integrity. If you want me to, I'll go before a notary public and make an affidavit that I haven't got your leg, that I haven't seen it, and, furthermore——' Scott didn't finish the sentence, for the beggar man up with his crutch in one hand and grabbed his wooden leg with the other, and started for him. I never saw Scott sprint better. And there was the crowd all looking at him, as if every one was tempted to join in the chase. Indeed, I heard one woman say, 'What a shame for an able-bodied young man like that to make trouble for a poor old one-legged man!' I could hardly keep back my tears. I turned to her and said: 'That sentiment does you credit, madam. It is a shame, but I'm afraid that young wretch isn't capable of sharing in that feeling.' 'He certainly did have a hard face,' she said——"

"What had become of Scott by this time?" asked Larcum.

"Oh, with his usual slippery facility, he'd dodged the crowd and come back into the sta-

tion. Even then, when I found him there, his adamant heart was not in the least softened. What do you think of that, fellows,—treating a poor old man, with a wooden leg, like that? ”

“ Now, what did I do? ” protested Scott. “ I was trying to treat the old whisky-soaked ruffian—— ”

“ ‘ Treat ’ him? ” interrupted Larcum. “ What was it you were trying to do? Say that again, and say it slowly. ”

“ Isn’t this country magnificent? ” suggested John, as he called the attention of his companions to the region through which the train was swiftly passing. “ Did you ever see such land? Then, with the great green hills just beyond the valley, it makes a picture one can’t forget. Look at the fields! Just see how prosperous every place is. Did you ever see such vineyards? And the horses and cattle and sheep! Why, they are as fine as the houses. You were speaking a minute ago about beggars. Doesn’t seem as if the word had any place out here. ”

“ It certainly is a beautiful country, ” acknowledged Scott, as all four boys gazed with interest at the scene. All that John had said was true, and in the mellow light of the early

morning the sight of the region was one to impress the young travelers.

“Isn’t much like the farming down East; is it, Jack?” inquired Larcum.

“No,” answered John promptly.

“I wonder what one of these ranchmen would think if for one day he should find farming here like what it is in your country. No shooting beans into the rocks here, so they’ll stay planted. No filing the noses of the sheep so they can get at a spear of grass between the rocks. No stones for the plows to strike. No dry spells—you see, these farmers in the West are not dependent on the weather any more——”

“Why not?” asked Lee quickly.

“They bring the water right to the field in ditches. Irrigation is the new trick now. When a farmer has that, he doesn’t care whether or not it ever rains. Then I wonder what a farmer up in the hills of northern New Hampshire would think of raising two or three, or even five crops on the same land, and all within a year——”

“Five crops of what?” demanded John scornfully.

“Alfalfa, for one thing—at least, they raise

five crops of it in the same year in the Southwest. Get twenty-five dollars a ton for it, too. I'm telling you the boys don't leave the farms out here the way they do back in the worn-out places where you live."

"There's one crop out here they can't raise as well as they can in the East," said John quietly.

"What's that?" demanded Larcum quickly.

"Men."

"Don't you believe that! Don't you believe it for a minute! I'm telling you that the greatest race the world has ever seen is going to be found out here. Why, man, just think of what there is here! There's a combination of ocean, mountain, soil, and climate that beats anything ever known! Then the class of people coming in here is of the best. No riffraff of Europe settling down here, no Black Hand, no failure of crops, no droughts——"

"You'll never get the greatest race on earth where there aren't any storms," retorted John warmly. "No race ever grew strong where there was just perpetual sunshine. Can't be done. Why, there's nothing in the world to put fire into a fellow, and make him feel that he can go out and fight the world, like a

real, old-fashioned, roaring, howling, northeast storm. I wouldn't want to live where they didn't raise that as a part of their crops."

"They get storms and a quake once in a while, but there isn't anything out here to interfere with success. Why——"

"Hold on a minute, Larc," interrupted Scott. "Do you own any land out here?"

"Not an inch."

"Does your father?"

"Yes." As his friends laughed, Larcum continued warmly, "He owns some because what I've been telling you is true."

"Oh, no; you've been telling us it is true because you or your father own the land. You're a 'boomer,' like all the others."

"Boom nothing! Can't you fellows see what is right before you when you look out the car windows?"

"Boomer! A common boomer, and he is nothing more!" said Scott slowly, shaking his head and his eyes twinkling as he was aware that his friend had been thoroughly aroused.

"Oh, you fellows are so full of your own ideas you haven't room for anything more, no matter how true it is! You talk about Plymouth Rock and all the hardships of the Pilgrims.

What were their hardships compared with those which the men who first came into California suffered? Have you forgotten the voyage around Cape Horn? Why, that of itself was enough to drive away any but the strongest. Then, there was the long, slow journey overland, the fights with the Indians, the drought, the slow-moving old prairie-schooners, the climbing the mountains, the crossing the plains and the rivers—why, if meeting hardships makes a race strong, then California certainly ought to have the strongest race on earth, for its early settlers had to meet things that make the *Mayflower* look like a sailboat on a Sunday-school excursion.”

“ You forget the main thing,” said John, as he quietly looked at his excited friend.

“ What do I forget? ” demanded Larcum.

“ The difference between the Pilgrim Fathers and the Forty-niners. One party came so that they might be free to worship God as their own consciences dictated, and the other came out here for gold.”

“ Bosh! Stuff! That isn't so! ” retorted Larcum warmly. “ I guess they all had more or less of the ‘ gold fever,’ only in California they found it, and on Plymouth Rock the metal

was mighty scarce. But I'm thinking your old Puritans did the best they could. Didn't they begin to drive sharp bargains with the Indians within a few hours after they set foot on shore? I've never heard that you people in the East didn't keep a pretty sharp lookout for the gold—and it didn't seem to make very much difference whether it happened to be in the rocks or in the pockets of the other fellow. If you waited long enough the psalm-singer had it in his own pocket at the end.

“ No, sir! I'm telling you the truth! If doing hard things makes a man or a nation strong, then out here on the Pacific coast the people can stand up and claim their share. What about Marcus Whitman and his friends? What about Lewis and Clark? What of John C. Frémont? What about the old Spaniards that built the wonderful old missions out here? I'm not trying to belittle what you people or your ancestors did in the East. That's not it! What I'm trying to show you is that American history is not bounded on the north by Concord and Lexington, on the south by Plymouth Rock, on the east by Bunker Hill, and on the west by the Hudson River or the Connecticut.”

“ More! More! ” exclaimed Scott mockingly, breaking in upon his friend’s speech.

“ No more. That’s enough, isn’t it? ” retorted Larcum more quietly. “ Now, all I want is for you fellows to tell me honestly just what you think. Isn’t what I have been saying the truth? ”

“ You’ll have to acknowledge, Larc,” continued John, who was not minded to give up easily when his favorite topics were lightly spoken of, “ that the life out here is more raw.”

“ ‘ Raw! ’ What do you mean? ”

“ Why, it’s wilder and rougher than it is in the East.”

“ Who says it is? ”

“ Everybody.”

“ Who’s he? I don’t know what you mean.”

“ Why, your trains are sometimes held up by train-robbers——”

“ Wait a minute! Did any of you fellows read the account in the papers only last month of two men who held up a fast express train right in old Pennsylvania? ”

“ We did! We did! ” responded Lee gleefully. “ And, according to the latest reports, they both got away, too; and neither of them

has been caught. Oh, yes, we've read of that, Larc. You're right."

"Well, train-robbers and smallpox are not bounded by geographical lines, are they?"

"Oh, that hold-up was something very unusual," said John calmly.

"It was, was it? Well, how many times have you been robbed on the train since you left Boston?"

"Every time Jack goes into the diner he groans as he thinks how he is being 'robbed,'" said Lee. "I've heard him groan. When the porter removes from the Bostonian's hat or coat any superfluous portions of the region through which the train has been passing, Jack groans again, and then some——"

"What's this?" interrupted Scott. "What are we stopping here for? We're right out in the country."

"Train robbery, probably," suggested Larcum sarcastically.

"I wouldn't feel bad if we did have a hold-up," said Scott. "I'd like to see what one is like."

The train had come to a standstill, but not one of the boys gave it any thought until the waiter abruptly came and said, in a shaking

voice, " We sure is held up! De trainman done say so."

For an instant the four boys stared blankly at one another, and then, moved by a common impulse, all leaped to their feet and started swiftly for the door of the car.

CHAPTER III

THE EXCITEMENT AMONG THE PASSENGERS

INCREDIBLE as the report of the frightened negro at first appeared to be, the four boys had not leaped to the ground before they found his words confirmed. A dozen or more men from the train were ahead of the young travelers and all were running swiftly toward the locomotive.

“Come on! Come on, fellows!” shouted Larcum, as he instantly turned to follow the excited passengers.

Following his example, the three boys ran swiftly after their huge companion, who speedily overtook the men in front of him. Apparently every one was strongly aroused, and the daring of the train-robbers, who had held up a train in broad daylight and so near the great cities, had awakened a determination on the part of the passengers to resist their attempts. No one seemed to be aware how many were in the band nor where the robbers were. The

throbbing of the locomotive was distinctly heard, and near the mail-cars several men were seen, but their actions were so quiet that it did not seem possible they could be the ones who had stopped the long train and threatened its passengers.

Suddenly the running passengers stopped as a pistol was fired twice by some one near the locomotive. No one was hurt, but the warning was abruptly heeded. A man, at that moment, stepped forward from the little group near the mail-car and pointed his pistol directly at the band of passengers and at the same time shouted, "Get back into the cars, every one of you!" The unarmed travelers hastily clambered up the steps and every one hastily re-entered the cars—our four boys being among the number.

"This is a great note!" exclaimed Larcum loudly. "Why don't we go out there and show the villains what we can do to them?"

"They're armed, Larc, and we aren't," explained John quietly.

"Somebody must have a gun," roared the excited Larcum, as he turned to the men in the car. "Hasn't anybody here got a pistol?" he shouted.



“GET BACK INTO THE CARS, EVERY ONE OF YOU!”—Page 34.

Apparently no one was in possession of a weapon of any kind, but the question served to increase the confusion among the passengers. Several children, hardly aware of the cause of the excitement, began to cry, and one frightened woman, seizing Larcum by the arm, looked up into his face and tremblingly said, "Do you think those awful men will scalp us?"

"No, I don't," replied the young giant, somewhat gruffly.

"Do you think they will rob us?"

"I don't know, madam," said Larcum, not unkindly. "I wish I knew how many of the rascals there are. If we had a popgun we could drive them off!"

"Don't you make any mistake, young man," said an old gentleman, standing in the aisle, to Larcum. "You're safe now, and you'd better stay so. These robbers are armed; they're prepared for this very thing and they're desperate. You'd better not fight them. If you do, you'll get the wrong end of the contest."

"But I can't stand this!" roared Larcum. "Why, they've shut us in here as if we were a lot of sheep in a pen!"

"Better that than to be lying out on the ground with a bullet in your head," suggested

the old gentleman. "I'm an older man than you are, and I'm convinced that 'a live dog is better than a dead lion.'"

"Oh, do you think these terrible men will come through the train?" tearfully began the woman who before had spoken. "I've heard that they go through the cars and tear the rings from the fingers of the women and shoot any one who refuses to give up his valuables. Is that true? Do you think they'll treat us in that way?"

"No, madam, I don't," said the old man kindly.

"I guess they won't as long as some of us are able to put up a fight," added Larcum. "Though it doesn't look very much that way now," he added, as he glanced over the terrified passengers. Some were weeping, some were plainly badly frightened, while others were hesitating as to what they should do under the circumstances. To have been quietly ordered back into the cars, without even an attempt to drive the desperadoes away, assuredly did not commend itself to some of the men as the bravest or even as the wisest course.

"I'm going to see what those fellows are

doing, anyway," growled Larcum, as he started once more toward the door.

"Hold on, Larc! Don't be foolish," protested Lee. "If the gang comes in here we'll put up a fight, but if they don't we'd better not provoke one. It's all right for us to defend ourselves and try to protect the women and children, but only a candidate for an idiot asylum would go out and stir those men up. I don't believe they'll come in here, anyway."

"Neither do I," joined in the old gentleman. "Those men aren't the kind that used to hold up the overland coaches and rob the passengers."

"What kind are they?" growled Larcum.

"They won't disturb the passengers."

"Why not?"

"They haven't time. Besides, that game is too small."

"What are they holding us up for, then?"

"I fancy you'll find the trouble in the express-cars. That is where the valuables are kept, you know. These desperadoes can secure the express matter and get away without losing much time. Very likely, too, they knew just what was being shipped by express."

"There isn't an express car on this train,"

said a man, who was standing near the four boys.

“Are you sure?” demanded Larcum.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then the robbers are not after express matter. Maybe that means that they’ll come through the train and compel the passengers to disgorge,” suggested the young giant.

“No, I think not.”

“I’m going to see what they’re doing, anyway,” roared Larcum.

Disregarding the protests of his friends, the young giant made his way to the end of the car and passed out upon the platform.

“We must look after him or he’ll get into trouble,” said Scott sharply, as, leaving the other boys, he hastened to join Larcum, who, he found was not so reckless as his words had implied. He was leaning out from the platform and with both hands was holding to the rail, so that only his head was exposed.

“What are they doing, Larc?” asked Scott excitedly.

“I can’t just see,” replied Larcum, without looking behind him. “There is a big pile of mail-bags there on the ground, but they don’t seem to be paying any attention to it.”

“ How many robbers are there? ”

“ I can't see but two.”

“ Two! ”

“ That's all. There's a fellow who is keeping the engineer right in front of him as a shield; then there's another one who is busy with the mail-pouches. I can't see any more.”

“ Do you mean to say that two men have held up this train? ”

“ That's the way it looks.”

“ If there are only two, why can't we creep up along the side of the train, come around by the locomotive, and get them both before they find out what we are up to? ”

“ I'm not for it,” said Larcum decidedly.

“ Why not? ”

“ Because, in the first place, something would happen to that engineer if we should try any such trick. The man has him covered with his pistol and, if he's daring enough to try that, he's daring enough to do the rest. No, we'll have to wait. If the villains don't come through the train, we won't take any chances. There! ” Larcum added excitedly. “ They're about ready to start. They're leaving all the mail-pouches in a heap, but they're having all the rest put back into the mail-car. The man

with the engineer is backing toward the locomotive——”

“ Let me see! ” broke in Scott eagerly, as he pushed his way down the steps, and, taking a place beside his friend, peered at the scene before them.

“ That’s right, Larc! ” he added. “ That’s just what the fellow is doing. He’s getting into the locomotive now! He’s keeping the engineer right there, though. No taking any chances for him.”

“ They’re off! They are going, just as sure as you’re born! ” roared Larcum, as, a moment later, the locomotive, to which one of the mail-cars was attached, freed from the rest of the train, started swiftly down the track.

With a shout the two boys leaped to the ground and ran swiftly toward the front of the train. Quickly all the men on the train joined them, and in a brief time the engineer, fireman, mail clerks, and conductor were surrounded by an excited mob, demanding to be informed how it all happened, and what was now to be done.

Leaving the engineer to explain, the conductor quickly ordered one of the trainmen to run to the little station in the rear, where the

locomotive previously had stopped to take water. As the distance was not more than a mile, or a mile and a half, it was confidently believed that the operator there would be able to send word ahead not only of the work of the train-robbers, but also to avoid the possibility of a collision with the express train which was due within an hour from the coast.

Meanwhile the engineer, the perspiration streaming down his face as he spoke, was telling his story to the excited group before him. "We'd stopped for water, you know," he was saying, "and I hadn't a thought of a hold-up! Why, I never heard of one like this! But what I thought didn't make any difference it seems, for pretty soon after we'd started I happened to look back and there were two young chaps pointing their pistols at me and at the fireman. Of course we knew without any explanation what they wanted, though we couldn't hear much of what they were saying. We were making up time, and that always means a little more noise, you understand."

"How many men were there?" asked Lar-cum.

"Two. They both wore masks, but I could see they were young fellows. I'd take one of

them to be about twenty-one and the other was twenty-five, maybe. Oh, they were doing it in regulation dime-novel style! They had little black masks that came to their chins, and their pistols were pearl-handled. Well, when they ordered me to stop the train, there wasn't anything else for me to do, so I did what they told me."

"Were they big fellows?"

"No; that's the joke of it all—if there is any joke," the engineer replied. "Neither one of 'em weighed more than a hundred and fifty pounds. I thought it was a joke, anyway, until I found out it wasn't. They ordered us both to point out the express-car, and, when I told them there wasn't any such car on this train, they made us go with them to make sure. You see, they'd made a mistake in the train—the express matter comes on Number 6, which follows us. However, neither one was willing to give up, so they decided to try the mail-cars. When we stopped in front of the coach, they called out for the clerks to open the doors, but the men wouldn't do it at first. Then the older chap spoke quietlike to the other fellow and told him to bring the bag of dynamite sticks. In a minute—it was the smaller

fellow who brought the stuff, which they must have had with them when they boarded the train back there by the water tower—I saw that the bag really was full of dynamite and that both the boys meant business. It was my turn then, so I called out to the clerks that they'd better open up, for the gang surely did mean business. The clerks then opened the doors and began to toss out the mail-bags. One of the robbers kept me right in front of him all the time, so that no one dared to shoot at him, for fear of hitting me.

“When the rascally train-robbers saw that the clerks were only throwing out the bags of second-class mail, they ordered them to stop and just put out the registered mail, and to be mighty sudden about it, too. The young chap who was the leader didn't speak very loud, and he seemed to smile good-naturedly, too, while he was talking; but he sure did mean business. When they got the nine sacks of registered mail, they put them all in one car, cut loose from the rest of the train, and set out the way you saw them.”

“They could run a locomotive, then, as well as they could rob a train,” suggested one of the men in the assembly.

“That remains to be seen. There’s a big chance for a lot of trouble. Hello, here comes the conductor, and, from his looks, I guess he’s got something interesting to say to us,” the engineer hastily added.

CHAPTER IV

ACROSS THE CONTINENT

REPLYING to the questions of the excited passengers, the conductor quietly explained that word of the daring hold-up had been sent to several stations, and that the offices in San Francisco also had been informed of the work of the train-robbers. The absence of excitement from the conductor's manner served, in a measure, to restore the confidence of the people, although some of the passengers still were plainly showing the effects of the startling experience.

"The men will be taken soon," said the conductor. "There isn't a chance for them to get away."

"What will be done with them?" inquired one of the assembly.

"Holding up a train is a capital offense," replied the conductor significantly.

"Do you suppose they knew that?"

"Whether they did or not, they will know

it very soon. They were just a couple of foolish boys, who probably had been reading accounts of the deeds of some villains, and thought it would be a great thing to imitate them. Now, if you will all go back to your places, you'll do more to help us than you can in any other way. There isn't any danger, and it won't be but a little while before we shall have a locomotive here and we'll get into Oakland not more than two hours late."

In response to the request, most of the men returned to their seats in the cars, where the alarm among the women and children was still manifest.

"Do you suppose they'll come back again?" inquired a little woman, who occupied a seat opposite that of Larcum and Lee.

"No, I don't think we'll hear of them again until we read about their being hanged for this morning's work," said Larcum lightly. "Here," he added, as he picked up the woman's baby and took the little fellow on his lap. "You'll help us fight off the train-robbers if they come back again, won't you?" For three days and nights the tired little mother had been on the same train with the four boys,

her time being divided between the care of her year-old boy and her helpless blind old father, who also was dependent upon her. The little woman smiled as she saw the young giant walk down the aisle, holding the baby in his arms as if he had been all his life accustomed to the care of children.

“Did you ever see such a fellow?” asked Lee, as he turned to his friends.

“Larc can make that baby squeal with delight just about as easily as he could wring the neck of a train-robber, if he should once get his hands on the rascal,” said Scott.

“Larc is one of the best fellows that ever lived,” said John warmly, as he watched his huge companion.

“That’s what he is!” joined in Scott. “Now I’m just as willing as Larc is to help that little woman, but, if I should hold out my hands to her baby, the little fellow would scream so that he could be heard from one end of the train to the other. What do you suppose makes the difference? I don’t understand it myself.”

“I’ll tell you, Scott,” said Lee promptly. “It’s this way: little children and dogs know a good man instinctively. They can tell him

just as soon as they see him. Now, if they can recognize a good man just as soon as they see him, the natural inference—oh, well, I'll let you draw the inference yourself," he added, with a laugh.

"Thank you," said Scott derisively. "Now you know——"

"Hold on, Scott!" interrupted John. "If I'm not mistaken, that's the whistle of our new locomotive. We'll be moving out of this region pretty soon now."

The scream of the approaching locomotive had been heard by others also, and in a moment Larcum rejoined his companions, placed the baby in its mother's arms, and hastened after the boys, who were all rushing to the platform. There John's surmise proved to be correct, and in a brief time the train once more was moving toward its destination.

"It's strange how soon an excitement like that we had an hour ago dies down," said John, when he and his friends once more were in their accustomed seats. "Now, if any one had told us before we started that we were to be on a train which would be held up by train-robbers, and that seventy-five minutes afterward we'd

be moving as quietly on our way as if nothing unusual had occurred, not one of us would have believed it."

"Correct," assented Scott. "But we're all keeping up a deal of thinking."

"About what?"

"The train-robbers."

"I'll tell you, fellows, what we ought to do," suggested Larcum. "There isn't any doubt that there'll be a big reward offered for the train-robbers——"

"And we ought to get it?" broke in Scott with a laugh.

"Precisely."

"Just tell us how," said Lee.

"That'll depend—but it can be done. Now, here's Jack," Larcum added, as he placed his hand on his friend's shoulder. "There isn't anything in the heavens above or earth beneath that he can't set right. He comes from Boston, you understand, and he seems to think that is all that is required to let him straighten out all the tangles of the universe."

"There's one thing your true-blue son of Boston can't do," said Scott, in mock seriousness.

"What's that? I have never yet heard of

anything," declared Larcum, as his friends laughed.

"He can't settle the affairs of Boston or of the native Bostonian."

"What do you mean by that?" John asked, so abruptly that the boys all laughed aloud.

"Jack," responded Scott, "you can translate almost any sentence from Latin, Greek, French, German, Pigeon English, or Hog Latin, can't you?"

"That's what you say."

"Well, if you can't translate that plain English sentence, then I'm afraid I can't help you very much," said Scott, his eyes twinkling.

"I'm afraid I can't do it."

"I'll help you, Jack," broke in Larcum. "As I understand Scott, what he meant was that you could tell the slave-owners what to do with their slaves. You could, through timid, modest, shrinking John Adams and a few others like him, tell all the people of America how they ought to behave. You could give suggestions to librarians and lawyers, baseball players and balloonists, colleges and countrymen, but somehow you don't appear to be quite able to——"

"You know as well as I do, Larc Brown,

that Boston is a better authority on culture than it is on pork-packing.”

“ Yes, I know it is so—in Boston,” broke in Larcum.

“ We can’t do much more than give good advice,” began John.

“ Correct.”

“ We can’t do very much more than give good advice,” repeated John. “ If others don’t know enough to follow it—that isn’t our fault, is it? ”

“ Certainly not,” acknowledged Larcum drolly. “ Jack, did you find out just what Scott meant when he referred to the one thing the true Bostonian couldn’t do? ”

“ No. What was it? ”

“ I fawncy the gentleman from New York, in his reference to all the benefits which have come to these United States of America via Boston, implied that in the midst of the profound and profuse discrimination of the specific duties of all other peoples and kindred and tongues and tribes that there was a bare possibility that this far-reaching native Bostonian failed to recognize the painful deficiency which, to others, is all too manifest, is his capacity to recognize the problems or find their proper solu-

tion in so far and inasmuch as they appertained to the Bostonian's proper and native lair. You comprehend the correlation of the consecutive consecution of my concise and contrite contribution to the colossal confidence of——”

“ Perfectly! Perfectly!” broke in John, with a laugh as his huge friend was not able to complete his sentence. “ What you infer is that we good people of Boston spend too much time on the troubles and problems of other people and don't mind our own business as we ought.”

“ Magnificent!” ejaculated Larcum. “ How terse! Notice how concisely the truth is stated. That is precisely what I meant.”

“ Only you've got it slightly mixed with what we term unselfishness,” said John.

“ There's our mail-car!” broke in Lee, as he pointed to a car on a side-track by which the train now was passing.

“ Does look like it,” said Scott excitedly, as the four boys stood up and peered out of the car window.

“ Where's the locomotive, if that is our car?” asked John.

“ We may see that later,” replied Lee.

“Where are the train-robbers?” inquired John.

“That, my friend, is the very problem to which I want you to turn your massively confident Bostonian intellect,” retorted Larcum. “You, who can tell all the rest of us how to do it; you, who mastered so easily the number of parasangs which Clearchus marched in a day’s journey; you, who solved without the slightest difficulty into how many parts all Gaul was divided, must now give the benighted people of the Far West, and eke also and besides, the sadly perplexed officials of the road, the benefit of all your classical lore and your disciplined mind. Just find these two train-robbers, Jack, and I’ll own up that your Latin and Greek pay.”

“You won’t object to taking a share of the reward, will you, Larc?” laughed John.

“No, sir. That’s where my training comes in,” said Larcum soberly, as his friends laughed.

“There’s our locomotive, fellows!” suddenly exclaimed Scott, as he pointed to a locomotive that had been overturned and was lying near the track. Instantly there was a rush to the side of the car from which the sight could

be seen. Steam was still escaping from the broken engine. The half-dozen men who were standing near the helpless mass waved their hands and shouted to the passengers as the train slowly passed.

On the same siding where the locomotive had been derailed a long passenger train also was standing, and the noisy greetings of its inmates were returned in kind as the "robber train" slowly drew past it.

"Larc," inquired John, "why was that engine turned over like that?"

"I have received no definite information," replied Larcum, "but I suspect the station-men here, after they received word of the robbery and that the robbers had run away with the engine and a mail-car, got ready to 'throw' the locomotive, so that this other passenger train would not run into it. You know, there are people who seriously object to a collision between a runaway locomotive and their train."

"But the train-robbers were on this locomotive," persisted John.

"Jack," said Larcum soberly, "do you really believe that 'thence Clearchus marched fourteen parasangs'?"

“ Yes, but what has that to do with these train-robbers or this locomotive? ”

“ Well, if you believe that about the parangs and Clearchus, how can you believe the robbers would stay on the engine and be caught? ”

“ Didn't they stay? ”

“ I haven't received any definite word from them, Jack, but my impression is that, after they'd run the car two or three miles ahead, they cut loose from the locomotive and sent that on ahead as a wildcat, while they looted the mail-bags.”

“ But they must have known there might be a collision if they sent the locomotive ahead at full speed.”

“ Splendid! After this I shall never question the value of studying the dead languages, Jack,” laughed Larcum. “ You have struck the nail on the head, and the first time! ”

“ But they must have thought of that,” persisted John.

“ That's just what they did think. The villains must have believed that, if there should be a collision, their own chances of getting away would be much better. I'm telling you

that California is right—hanging is too good for such men! I hope they'll be caught!"

"The conductor said they would be."

"Yes, I know he did."

"Don't you think they will?"

"I told you I hoped they would. Here comes the porter—we must be near Oakland. Let's get our belongings together."

The suggestion was at once acted upon by the four boys, and, not long afterward, the long journey across the continent was completed when the young travelers departed from the train in the huge station at Oakland and made their way to the ferryboat, on which they were to cross the bay to San Francisco.

"Why, these ferryboats are quite large, aren't they?" said Jack.

"*'O tempora! O mores!'* and all the rest," snapped Larcum. "Don't you know there isn't a ferryboat in New York or Boston harbor as large as these are? 'Quite large!' Oh, Jack, what shall I do with you? Hello!" Larcum quickly added. "Look at that!" As he spoke, the young giant pointed to a flaring headline in a newspaper that was in the hands of a young man near the boys. "That is something for us! We must not lose that."

CHAPTER V

THE INTERVIEW

WITH great flaring headlines the story of the train robbery, which had occurred only a few hours before, was now facing the boys from a newspaper held in the hands of a man who was standing near them.

“ I must get a paper somewhere ! ” exclaimed Scott, as he turned hastily from his companions. In a brief time he returned, and, as the four boys withdrew to a more secluded spot on the deck, he read aloud the thrilling account of the daring robbery of the morning.

“ Posses are already searching for the robbers, are they ? ” asked Larcum, when the sensational account had been read.

“ Yes, that’s what the report is,” replied Scott. “ They seem to think the robbers can’t be very far from the place where they held us up.”

“ They’ll be caught soon,” said John confidently. “ The conductor said they would.”

“ I wish we might get them,” suggested Larcum. “ What is the reward which the railway people offered? ”

“ Five thousand dollars.”

“ I’m afraid the size of the reward doesn’t look very much as if they were sure they would run the rascals to cover. I wish we could get that reward.”

“ I’m satisfied without it,” said John. “ I’d rather have them leave me alone than get the reward if we had to get into their clutches.”

“ I’d like to chance that part of it,” declared Larcum lightly. “ Well, we’ve had an experience anyway. It isn’t often a man has the chance to tell of his experience in a train robbery.”

“ It’s like having the smallpox—once is just one too many,” said Scott.

“ We didn’t suffer, anyway,” suggested Lee. “ We can’t complain.”

“ Yes, but I want to help get the villains,” said Larcum. “ I wish Jack would focus all his mental powers on such a problem as that is. There’s more sense in trying to catch thieves than there is in trying to work out the distance of the earth from the nearest planet. What difference does the distance make, any-

way? Suppose we did know just how many miles we are from our neighbors, it wouldn't affect us, would it? There'd be just as many hours as ever that I'd have to devote to the relations between Larcum Brown and the T. G. & P. Railroad."

"We'll get Jack to solve the problem of how the train-robbers are to be caught, but don't forget to take in that sight of San Francisco and this wonderful bay," said Lee.

Diverted by the suggestion, all four boys turned to look at the city they were approaching. Spread along the hillside and overlooking the waters of the wonderful harbor, with stately buildings showing in the midst of the verdure, with the sunlight streaming over hillside and harbor and over the islands and highlands behind them, the city of St. Francis could not fail to make a deep impression on the minds of the four young travelers.

"Doesn't seem possible, does it," said Scott, "that so many of these great buildings could have been put up since the earthquake?"

"San Francisco doesn't talk of the earthquake," suggested Larcum. "Some of the people may refer to the 'fire.' They say the quake didn't amount to so very much, and no one

would have paid very much attention to it if it hadn't happened to twist the water mains so that, when the fire broke out, the firemen couldn't get water with which to fight the fire."

"Fire does play havoc with a city, doesn't it?" suggested John. "If I remember aright, Chicago had one or two fires. The big fire was started by a woman—or was it a cow—overturning a lantern in or near the mayor's office? Isn't that right, Larc?"

"Right enough," growled the young giant. "Boston had a fire, too, didn't it? The town was as dry as punk, and, when it got going, nothing would or could stop it for a while."

"Quit your quarreling over your towns," remonstrated Scott. "You're too far from home for that. Besides, you don't want to lose sight of this city. I tell you, Larc, if I were to come West to stay, I wouldn't stop off at Chicago. I'd keep straight on until I came to the Pacific Ocean."

"You needn't stop there on my account," retorted Larcum.

"Oh, I sha'n't," laughed Scott. "Here we are at the ferry slip. I didn't know it took twenty minutes to cross the bay."

"Indeed! Well, you know a little more than

you did an hour ago, and there's some comfort in that. Here we go, fellows!" Larcum added, as he seized his suitcase and joined the throng which now was moving toward the street.

"Fine ferryhouse, Larc," said John, as he walked beside his friend and glanced about him at the immense structure through which great throngs of men were now surging.

As Larcum quietly assumed the leadership, his friends followed him when he boarded a trolley car, and in a few minutes the young travelers had alighted, registered at the hotel, where rooms already had been reserved by telegraphing ahead, and soon were washed and in their right minds, as Scott laughingly described their condition.

"Pretty good hotel; eh, Larc?" suggested Scott, when the four boys were assembled in the dining-room for their luncheon.

"Pretty good? There isn't a better in the country," retorted Larcum.

"It is quite remarkable," assented Scott soberly. "One would hardly expect to find such a well-kept hostelry so far away."

"So far away from what?" demanded Larcum sharply.

“Why, so far from—New York,” retorted Scott, winking at Lee as he spoke.

“Scott Gordon!” began Larcum, “I’ll have to get some of——”

“Pardon me, but may I inquire if you young gentlemen were on the train that was held up this morning?”

As the four boys looked up at the interruption they saw a young man not much older than they, who was standing beside their table.

“Yes, we happened to be on the train,” assented John.

“If you do not object, I should be glad if you would give me your account of it. I am a reporter from the ——” he added, as he drew a notebook and pencil from his pocket, and, without waiting to be invited, beckoned to the waiter for an additional chair to be brought, in which he at once seated himself and drew more closely to the table.

“Now, then” he began, “what I want is your own account as eye-witnesses of what occurred.”

“We can’t give you anything more than the papers already have,” said Larcum, who by common consent at once became the spokesman of the party.

“ Give me your own experiences.”

“ We didn’t have any. The villains drove every passenger back into the cars.”

“ There were only two of the robbers. Do you mean to tell me that not a man on the train dared to stand against them? ”

“ That’s it,” said Larcum dryly.

“ You certainly were a brave lot,” laughed the reporter.

“ Any man can be brave—when he isn’t looking into the pistol of a low-lived villain. They’ll both get what they deserve!” Larcum added angrily.

“ When? ”

“ When they are caught.”

“ And just when will that be? ” asked the reporter quizzically.

“ Some of the posses will run them down.”

“ Then the train-robbers are in the hills, are they? ”

“ You’ll have to ask the sheriff. We aren’t chasing the rascals.”

“ Would you recognize them if you should see them? ”

“ We might.”

“ Describe them to me.”

“ They were both young fellows—and very

likely had been reading up on dime novels. That was about their intellectual measure.”

“ They were villainous-looking fellows, you say? ”

“ I didn’t say they looked like villains; I said they were villains. They couldn’t have been very smart or they would have known what sentence a train-robber in California gets. Besides, the fools made a mistake in the train—they didn’t know the difference between a mail-car and an express-car. That of itself shows how much they knew. They haven’t brains enough to keep out of the hands of the parties that are searching for them.”

“ It seems to me,” laughed the reporter, “ that two such young fellows as you describe, who have the nerve to hold up a whole train and drive off every man that tried to get near them, aren’t going to lose their heads when they are being chased. Don’t you think so? ”

“ No, I don’t,” said Larcum sharply. “ They don’t stand the ghost of a chance of getting away! ”

“ Not even if they make for the cañons? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Well, from what I saw of the place, I’d rather take my chances with them of not being

caught than of any man in the searching parties of ever spending any of that reward which has been offered for their capture. Of course that is merely a matter of opinion. Now, then, if you will answer a few questions, I'll not trouble you any more."

"Go ahead."

"Could you describe the robbers?"

"Not very fully."

"Would you be able to identify them?"

"I am not sure, though I think I could. The bigger one was about your size——"

"Sure I am not the man myself?" interrupted the reporter, with a laugh.

"No, I am not sure."

"Any others of the passengers able to identify the robbers?"

"Probably we saw as much of them as any one did, except the engineer and fireman."

"And yet you are not certain enough about it yourselves to say that I was not one of them."

"In height, weight, size, and nerve you might pass. If you'll slip a black mask on for a minute, we'll be more sure."

"Sorry I haven't one with me," laughed the reporter. "I must be going on to interview some more of the passengers. A good

many of them are stopping at this hotel. Thank you for the information you have given me," he added, as he arose and at once left the table.

"We didn't give him any information, Larc," suggested John.

"He acted as if he thought he had a 'scoop,'" said John.

"What is a 'scoop'?"

"It's an expression a newspaper reporter uses when he finds a 'story' before any of his rivals get hold of it," explained John. "This fellow certainly was on the ground early. He'd been out to the place where the hold-up took place. How do you think he did that?"

"Oh, the newspapers have all sorts of ways of getting the news," said Larcum.

"You don't suppose this chap could have been right on the ground, do you?"

"What do you mean, Jack?" demanded Larcum quickly.

"I don't know that I mean anything."

"You aren't suggesting that this reporter might have been——"

"I'm not suggesting anything, I tell you!" interrupted John. "All I said was that he was early on the ground, that's all. I didn't think of that until you told him that one

of the train-robbers was about his size. And he was, too, when you come to think of it."

" "Thence Clearchus marched fourteen parasangs," " laughed Larcum. "The discipline of your mental powers by the study of Greek will lead you next to charge me with holding up our train."

"No danger of that, Larc," laughed Scott. "These fellows were both smaller than you are and they had a superfluity of nerve."

"Humph!" retorted Larcum, as his friends laughed. "They certainly did beat a masterly retreat and that's something I haven't learned to do—yet."

"How about that retreat of yours into the car along with all the rest of the passengers, Larc?" inquired Scott.

"I wasn't retreating!" retorted Larcum.

"You withdrew, then; call it that," continued Scott. "You withdrew from the scene of battle in splendid array. You didn't lose a flag, or a gun, or a man in your masterly withdrawal."

"Something else, too, that he didn't lose in his retreat—I mean his withdrawal," suggested Lee.

“What was that?” demanded Larcum sharply.

“A minute,” retorted Lee.

Even Larcum was compelled to join in the laugh that greeted Lee’s words, but the young giant, good-naturedly changing the subject, said: “Now, fellows, we don’t leave for the Yosemite until half-past eleven to-night. We’ve got the whole afternoon. What shall we do with it?”

“Got our reservations, Larc?” inquired Scott.

“No; I’ll get them while you fellows are deciding what we’ll do this afternoon.”

The problem of the four boys, however, was solved for them, and in a manner of which they had no thought.

CHAPTER VI

AN AUTOMOBILE

“MR. BROWN!” called a bellboy, as the four boys arose.

“That’s you, Larc,” suggested Scott. “There can’t be more than one Mr. Brown here. Even if there were several, you would still be the one.”

“Mr. Brown! Mr. Brown, please!” called the bellboy once more, as he came near our party.

“My name is Brown,” said Larcum, as he turned to the boy. “Let me see your message.”

As the bellboy stopped and held out his letter, Scott said quickly: “I was right, Larc, it’s for Mr. Larcum Brown. There’s only one of the kind.”

Unmindful of his friend’s bantering, Larcum hastily tore open the envelope and, ignoring the curiosity of the boys, slowly read the letter.

“What is it, Larc? Why don’t you speak up?” demanded Lee.

“It was for me,” said Larcum.

“Of course. We knew it couldn’t be for any one else. But what is the message? Is it something for you, or does it concern us all?”

“Indirectly, it may concern you—it certainly does me,” replied Larcum.

“Well, what is it?” said Scott impatiently.

“It’s a message.”

“What is the message?”

“I’m a bit afraid to tell you—just yet. I’ll tell you, fellows. You all go up to our rooms and get ready while I go to the office and make our reservations for to-night.”

“Bother the reservations,” said Scott impatiently. “What I want to know is what this message is—you say it concerns us all. Let the reservations take care of themselves!”

“Hear him!” exclaimed Larcum, glancing in pretended surprise at Scott. “Any one who heard him might think he had never been away from home before. ‘Bother the reservations.’ Don’t you know, Scott, that the first preponderating, overwhelming prerequisite in successful traveling is to have your sections in the sleeper reserved for you?”

“ I guess there won't be any jam to-night. It's too early in the season. If it was August now, instead of June, it would be a different matter.”

“ I take no chances,” said Larcum soberly. “ You poor unprotected and unsophisticated peregrinators depart to the places where you belong, and stay there till I come back. I'll not be gone long, but don't one of you dare to venture out of the rooms until I come back. Here's John, he might get hit by a trolley car—he isn't used to cars that move. Scott, now, might be frightened if he should find there was any real life outside of New York; and Lee—why, Lee would be lost if he got out into the streets. No, sir; all three of you do just what I say, and when I come back, if you have been good little boys, I'll have something nice for you. Now do what I tell you,” Larcum added, as he took his hat and departed.

A half-hour later he returned to the hotel, and at once went to his room, where he found Lee and John awaiting his return. “ Where is Scott? ” he demanded, as soon as he entered the room.

“ Gone,” said John.

“ ‘ Gone! ’ Where has he gone? ”

“ To look for you, I reckon,” laughed Lee. “ He thought you were lost.”

“ He did, did he? Well, he’ll find out who is lost. Now, fellows, come on,” he added, as he turned to the door.

“ Where are we going, Larc? ” asked John.

“ You are going with me. I’ve got our reservations all right, but, if I hadn’t been a railroad man, I’d have had my troubles. There’s a crowd going out to the Yosemite to-night. The man told me at first I couldn’t have anything but two upper berths, but, when he found out who I really was—why, the drawing-room wasn’t good enough.”

“ You took it though, didn’t you, Larc? ” laughed Lee.

“ I did. That provides for three of us, but the fourth fellow will have to take an upper berth. I’ll tell you what we’ll do, fellows,” Larcum added quickly; “ we’ll draw lots for the berths in the drawing-room and let Scott have that upper berth. If he had been here as he ought to have been, and as I told him to be, he’d have had his chance with the rest of us. Now we’ll tell him the upper berth is his and we won’t say anything about our having the drawing-room to ourselves. You hear me? ”

“ Verily,” laughed Lee. “ Poor Scott! ”

“ If he’d pay attention to what is told him, he’d be all right,” said Larcum. “ I’m sorry, but he’s one of the fellows that have to be taught by hard knocks.”

“ Or by a hard knocker,” suggested Lee.

“ Come on,” said Larcum, ignoring Lee’s words.

“ All right, me lud, but where do we go? ”

“ I told you—with me.”

Leading the way, Larcum at once went to the elevator, and, when the boys were in the lobby, he left them for a moment as he went to the desk to leave a message. Quickly rejoining his friends, he said: “ Come on. Here we are,” he added, as near the curb he stopped in front of a huge touring-car.

“ Where did you get this, Larc? ” said Lee, as he and John obediently entered and took their seats. “ It certainly is fine.”

“ This car belongs to a prominent railway official—a friend of mine,” explained Larcum soberly. “ As soon as he heard that I had come to town, he immediately sent me word that his motor was at my disposal.”

“ Was that the message the bellboy brought you this noon? ” asked John.

“ I cannot tell a lie—it was.”

“ One part of your statement is true—the other may be.”

“ Where is Scott? ” said Lee, as he glanced up and down the street.

“ Gone to learn his little lesson,” growled Larcum.

“ Are you going without him? ”

“ I dislike to put it that way—the true explanation is that Scott, by his impulsive and disingenuous—I might say superabounding—conceit that there is little for him to learn outside his own native bailiwick, has deprived us of the pleasure of his company. Where do we go? ” Larcum added, as he turned to the driver.

“ Anywhere you say, sir. My orders are to show you the city.”

“ Do so, then; do so, by all means,” said Larcum, as he took his seat beside the chauffeur.

Neither Lee nor John believed that their friend really intended to start without Scott, but in a moment the motor was off and the party was proceeding along Market Street.

“ Hold on, Larc! ” exclaimed Lee, a few minutes later. “ There’s Scott! See him in the crowd there in front of that window? ” As he

spoke, Lee pointed to a place where a crowd had assembled to watch a man who was displaying the virtues of a new apparatus for exercising the muscles of the arms. Whistling shrilly as the motor slowed up, by the familiar signal he caused Scott to turn about abruptly and stare in astonishment at his friends.

“Come on, Scott!” called Lee. “You almost got left.”

“Where are you going?” demanded Scott, as he hastily responded and climbed into the rear seat beside Lee and John.

“What were you doing?” retorted Larcum. “Standing there in front of that window, gazing at a new exercising machine as if you never had been in a city before! Why didn’t you stay where I put you?”

“I went out to look you up. I was afraid you’d be lost.”

“That was thoughtful of you,” remarked Larcum grimly, “but next time you want to look out for Scott Gordon. We haven’t any time to waste looking you up. What did you go out for, anyway?”

“Just to take a little tramp on the street.”

“Did you take him?”

“Take whom?”

“ The ‘ little tramp ’ you mentioned.”

“ Let me out! I can’t stand this!” retorted Scott, rising from his seat.

“ You’ll have to stand it, Scott,” laughed Lee, as he pulled his friend back upon the seat beside him. “ Now be good and you’ll be happy.”

“ More likely to be lonesome—in this crowd,” said Scott.

“ That isn’t original, Scott Gordon,” said Larcum soberly. “ I’ve heard that before. Now, keep your eyes open and be ready to see things.”

“ But I don’t understand where you got this motor,” began Scott.

“ Keep quiet,” ordered Larcum. “ Let me talk. It isn’t often I get a chance. Now notice all these magnificent office buildings along Market Street—all built since the fire. They are as imposing as any in this broad land of ours——”

“ Quite pretty,” broke in Scott, in mock seriousness. “ Where did the money to build them with come from? New York?”

“ The buildings are magnificent,” continued Larcum, “ but not half as magnificent as the courage of the people. Think of it, fellows!

All this part of San Francisco was burned at the time of the fire."

"You mean the earthquake, don't you, Larc?" asked Scott.

"I mean the fire. You know San Francisco was under military rule, don't you, at that time? Everybody had to stand in line in the bread line and wait for his turn, it didn't make any difference whether he was rich or poor or high or low. My aunt was living here at the time. The quake didn't do a great deal of damage to the house she was living in—they were outside the fire line. But she had a stove set up in the street, and for three months she took care of eighteen people. Money wasn't any good. You couldn't buy a thing with it."

"Not even a ticket over the T. G. & P?" asked Scott.

"No, sir; not a ticket, nor a loaf of bread, nor a bottle of milk. Everybody had to take his turn. But look at it now! There isn't a city in the country that could have shown such nerve! The people didn't give up—they went right at the work, cleared up the ruins, put up new buildings, and to-day, as you look around, you wouldn't even suspect there ever had been a fire—and it's only five years."

“It is fine, Scott,” murmured Lee.

“You’re right it is! Now we’re going to climb this hill and you’ll get a view that will make every one of you open his eyes.” The automobile now was beyond the crowded, busy streets and had gained the summit of a high hill, as Larcum had said. “Yonder is the Pacific Ocean. Look across the bay! See the hills and the mountains! Then look down and see the city. Isn’t it all wonderful?”

Even Scott had no protest to offer when the magnificent view spread out before them.

“That’s the first time I ever saw the blue Pacific,” said John enthusiastically, as the car sped on.

“What do you think of it?”

“It’s wonderful,” said John, in a low voice. “I don’t wonder that the people here love it all.”

“You haven’t seen much yet. Just wait!” responded Larcum.

Later, when their automobile carried them through Golden Gate Park, with its miles of drives and broad fields, its wonderful flowers and trees, its Japanese gardens, art museums, and winding walks, and over all was the clear sky and beyond them were the shining waters

of the broad Pacific, the quiet enthusiasm of the boys was marked—even Scott acknowledging that the ride was “most interesting.”

Now the motor swept along the shore, where crowds of people were to be seen, and then stopped at the famous Cliff House, where the boys alighted and entered, taking their places near a window, from which the jagged rocks near the shore could be seen.

“Look yonder!” exclaimed Lee, in excitement, as he pointed to the rocks. “They’re alive as sure as you’re born!”

“They are covered with seals,” explained Larcum quietly. “Hear them? They are barking.”

“Sounds to me more like the sounds my grandfather used to make when he was trying to pull his boots on,” said Scott.

“Quite likely,” retorted Larcum dryly. “I suspect you take after your grandfather, don’t you, Scott?”

In a brief time the ride was resumed, and, as the car entered the Presidio, the high, level ground where the United States troops were stationed, Larcum said quietly, “Yonder is the Golden Gate.”

Instantly every boy turned to look at the

narrow entrance to San Francisco Bay. The headlands on either side were sharply defined in the clear air, and the glow of the afternoon sun seemed almost to tinge the very waters of the sea. The Golden Gate! Far away were Japan and the Orient and the other side of the world.

For a moment the four boys were silent as they all gazed at the impressive scene.

“That sight is worth a journey across the continent,” murmured John.

“There’s our reporter,” suddenly interrupted Lee, as he pointed to a man who was standing near the place where the motor stopped and was looking intently at the four boys.

CHAPTER VII

THE START FOR THE YOSEMITE

“ I DON’T like that fellow,” said Larcum, in a low voice, as the boys all looked at the young man to whom Lee had directed their attention.

“ What’s the trouble with him? ” laughed Scott. “ You acted this noon as if you suspected him of being one of the train-robbers. ”

“ I don’t know that he wasn’t,” retorted Larcum.

“ Well, you don’t know that he was,” rejoined Scott. “ Probably he held up the train and then came into San Francisco ahead of us. That’s a case in which even ‘ Clearchus ’ couldn’t have much to say. ”

“ But you don’t know that he did get into town before we did,” rejoined Larcum.

“ We know he was here when we went into the dining-room of the hotel. ”

“ That doesn’t prove anything. ”

“ Why don’t you ask him yourself, Larc? ”

laughed Scott. "Here he comes; you can 'do it now,'" he added, as the young reporter approached the car in which the four boys were seated.

"Here you are again," said the reporter lightly.

"Yes; we're having a spin about the city," said Larcum pleasantly. "Don't you want to join us?" he added, disregarding the glances of surprise with which his three companions heard his invitation.

"Thank you; I don't mind if I do," said the reporter quickly, as he hastily climbed into the back seat beside Lee and John. "I came up to the Presidio for a story, but I haven't been much more successful than I was with you boys this noon."

"Has anything more been heard of the men?" asked John.

"There are a dozen reports, but none of them seems to be worth much."

"What are they?" inquired Lee.

"Oh, one report has it that the robbers have been seen in Oakland; another is that they've gone north to the Shasta country, and still another is that they are somewhere up in the Sacramento Valley."

“ Where do you think they are? ” asked Larcum quietly.

“ I wish I knew,” laughed the young reporter. “ If I did, I’d have the best story I ever found. It would be a ‘ scoop.’ ”

“ Has anybody suggested that the men divided their forces, and that one of them might have come to San Francisco? ” inquired Larcum, as he looked innocently into the face of the man.

“ I don’t believe they’d be foolish enough to try that.”

“ Why not? A big city is about the safest place in the world for a rascal to hide in, isn’t it? ”

“ I hadn’t thought of it in that way,” said the reporter lightly. “ The police here know just where to look for their men, and they probably already are watching every crook in San Francisco.”

“ That may be true,” acknowledged Larcum; “ but you don’t think any more than I do that these train-robbers were old hands at the game, do you? ”

“ Why not? ” The reporter, in apparent surprise, looked at Larcum as he spoke, but the young giant’s face was expressionless.

“They were not professionals,” said Larcum quietly.

“I don’t know about that. Last week there were two young fellows that escaped from the state prison. They were burglars, and as desperate characters as were ever known in California.”

“And you think they may have held up our train?” asked Lee.

“That’s what some people have suggested,” replied the reporter.

“They weren’t the men,” said Larcum positively.

“How do you know they weren’t?”

“There are several reasons. If I wanted to get that reward of five thousand dollars, I’d begin my search right here in San Francisco,” said Larcum.

“I should like to join you,” laughed the reporter noisily, “though I don’t believe we’d find a trace of them here—at least not within a year. No, sir; this city is the last place, not the first, they will go to.”

“Will you help me look?” asked Larcum quickly.

“I’d like to,” replied the reporter lightly;

“but I can't do it. I have to leave town this evening.”

“How long will you be gone?” inquired Larcum.

“I don't know. It will depend upon circumstances. I may be gone two days, and I may be away a week or more.”

“That's too bad.”

“Yes, I'm sorry, too. I'd like to have a share of that five thousand dollars. It would be more than the train-robbers got, anyway,” said the reporter lightly.

“It won't be more than they will get.”

“If they are caught.”

“They'll be caught,” declared Larcum confidently. “The villains stand just about as much chance of getting away as I do of being elected president of the T. G. & P. next week.”

“That remains to be seen.”

“Yes, that remains to be seen,” acknowledged the young giant quietly. “I think we'd better be going back,” he continued. “Take one more good look at the Golden Gate, fellows, and then we'll start.”

“Out yonder,” suggested the reporter, as he pointed toward a place in the distance, “is

where the *Rio de Janeiro* was wrecked a few years ago.”

“What was she?” inquired John.

“One of the big steamers that carried on the trade with the Orient. She was loaded with passengers and freight, and had come all the way across the Pacific safely—only to be wrecked out there, just outside the Golden Gate. Passengers, crew, freight—all went down.”

“And almost at the dock?” asked Scott.

“Yes.”

“That’s worse than being wrecked in the middle of the ocean.”

“That’s what everybody said.”

“Do you know what that makes me think of?” spoke up Larcum. Then, without waiting for his question to be answered, he continued: “It reminds me of a good many men. They seem to get along pretty well until they have almost finished their jobs. To quit then or not to do things to a finish—why, my father is always telling me that, for a man to succeed, he must ‘do things to a finish’ and ‘tie a good-sized knot in his thread.’”

“What does he mean?” asked John.

“I sha’n’t explain if you can’t reason it out, Jack.”

“ But he let you leave college at the end of your freshman year,” suggested John.

The face of the young giant flushed slightly as he said: “ That was the ‘ end,’ good and plenty, for me. My father wanted me to do something. Besides,” he added lightly, “ these were circumstances over which I had no control. It makes me think of what Lee said about General Lee at the battle of Gettysburg. You know, he is always claiming that General Lee would have won that battle if it hadn’t been for ‘ circumstances over which he had no control.’ ”

“ And he would, too, and you know it! ” spoke up Lee, rather warmly.

“ I’m not denying it; I am just wondering if General Meade and his army didn’t happen to be one of the circumstances, that’s all.”

“ Now, see here, Larc— ” began Lee, still more warmly.

“ Never mind, Lee,” broke in Larcum soothingly; “ we’re all willing to admit that General Lee was a great man—almost half as great as you think he was. There! there! ” he added, as his friend began to protest. “ I guess all our heroes were human, like the rest of us; and I’m glad of it. When I was young I was

taught that George Washington was a man without a fault. Now I am old, I know better; and I like George all the more because I understand now that he belongs to the human family.”

“What has all that to do with the wreck of the *Rio de Janeiro* out here by the Golden Gate?” demanded Scott. “You don’t stick to your text. It seems to me that somewhere, sometime, somehow I heard some one remark that it was a wise thing to ‘do things to a finish.’”

“So it is,” remarked Larcum, disregarding the laugh that greeted Scott’s words. “My mother used to make me finish every book I began to read. She wouldn’t let me skip, and she wouldn’t let me stop after I began it. I used to think in those bygone years of my callow youth that she was a trifle hard with me, but in my later years I have realized the value of her consistent training.”

“And the good ship *Rio de Janeiro* was wrecked just outside the Golden Gate,” murmured John.

“That’s right. Laugh if you want to, but I’m telling you that the wreck was just like the way it will be with those train-robbers.”

“How?” asked Lee.

“They’ll think they’re all safe; and then, by and by, after they’ve grown confident, they’ll put for home, and just when they get there they’ll find somebody is on the watch for them, and they’ll be taken——”

“Just outside the Golden Gate?” interrupted Scott.

“Drive on!” ordered Larcum, turning to the chauffeur. Without betraying their interest, the four boys had been watching the reporter while Larcum was speaking, but apparently he was not heeding the young giant’s words.

“This used to be called Nob Hill,” the reporter explained, when the motor entered another section of the city. “These houses were almost palaces, but they haven’t all been built up since the fire.”

“Why not?” asked John.

“Business first,” laughed the reporter.

“First, last, and all the time with some people,” murmured Lee.

“Whose? Their own or some other person’s?” retorted Larcum.

“Here we are in Chinatown,” explained the reporter, as the automobile turned into a section in which most of the people were Chinese.

“ It isn’t what it used to be before the fire. The best time to see it is about eleven o’clock at night.”

“ This is enough for me,” said John. “ Is it true that a good many of the ‘ sights ’ are gotten up just for the benefit of the sight-seers? ”

“ I’ve heard that, but I can’t say.”

“ Here are some Japs, too,” suggested Scott. “ Californians don’t seem to waste any more affection on the Japanese than they do on the Chinese, according to newspaper reports. Is that true? ”

“ Partly,” said the reporter. “ You people in the East don’t understand. We haven’t anything against either of them—except when they take work out of the hands of Americans.”

“ What Americans? Pietro Ivegottévitch? Bridget O’Flannigan? ”

“ You don’t understand,” continued the reporter. “ Now, the Japs are a mighty shrewd people. They’ll start a laundry and do the work so cheaply that they’ll drive everybody else out of the business. Then up will go the price and they have all the work.”

“ I don’t see why. Can’t an American do the same thing? ” asked Scott.

“ No; not and live as an American.”

“ How does an American live? ”

“ He ought to have something besides rice to eat and a place to sleep in that is more than a cattle-car. Of course, all the Japs don't do that, but they can and will if it is necessary in order to get a start. Then, too, some of the Japs will go out of the city to work on a ranch——”

“ Why don't they work on the ranches in the city? ” said Larcum soberly.

“ Oh, this isn't Chicago, Larc? ” said Scott quickly. “ San Francisco has some city limits.”

Ignoring the laugh that greeted Scott's words, the reporter continued: “ The Jap padrone will take his men and go to work on some farm or ranch, and mighty good workers they are, too. But they are sly. Maybe they'll find out that the nominal owner of the farm has a mortgage on his place. They won't say a word—they'll just keep right on weeding and working and 'sawing wood.' They'll live on a little, save almost every penny, and then some fine morning the owner wakes up and finds the Japs own the mortgage on his broad acres. It doesn't take long for him to find that his workmen are dictating terms to him, and pretty

quick they own the farm, and he is out. I've known of that being done a great many times."

"But why don't the Americans save their money?" persisted John.

"They do; at least some do, though most of them would rather make money than save it. Besides, they can't live as the Japs do."

"I don't see why," said John.

"You wouldn't want them to."

"Wouldn't I? Well, if I remember aright, my ancestors didn't live in any very great luxury in the early days in New England. I've never heard that the pioneers took life very easily. I don't——"

"You don't know what you are talking about," broke in the reporter.

"And you want to go to war with Japan?" asked Scott.

"No; we don't want any war, but we don't want the Japs and Chinese coolies to take work away from Americans."

"Poor Ivan Ivegottévitch! Poor Bridget O'Flannigan! Poor Peter Howltotheskyski!" murmured Scott. "How many Japs are on the coast?"

"I don't know."

“ I do,” said John; “ about forty thousand. There aren’t any more Japs on the Pacific coast than there are Italians in a city like Newark. And yet we don’t get up a war with Italy. We don’t——”

“ You don’t understand,” protested the reporter. “ I’m telling you that none of these things is the real cause.”

“ What is, then? ”

“ It’s the natural feeling of race prejudice. You can’t have two different races living peaceably side by side. It’s against nature. You can see it in the South, where the whites and negroes are. It’s the same here, where the Californians and the Chinese and Japanese are.”

“ So I have heard,” said John.

“ Here we are at our hotel,” suggested Scott, glad to have an end of the somewhat heated discussion.

Late that evening the boys crossed by the ferry to Oakland, where they were to board their train for their journey to the Yosemite Valley. Scott was the first to enter the sleeping-car, but in a moment he hurriedly rejoined his friends, who were still outside.

“ Who do you think is in that car? ” he excitedly exclaimed.

“ It might be Julius Cæsar, judging from your interest,” laughed Lee. “ Who is it? ”

“ You come and see,” retorted Scott; “ that’s all I want. Come on and see for yourselves! ” he added, his excitement increasing as his three friends followed him into the sleeper.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OCCUPANT OF UPPER SEVEN

STANDING in the aisle and facing the four boys was the young reporter whom they had previously met several times. His surprise at the meeting was as genuine as their own, and, as he greeted them, he said, "Going to the Yosemite?"

"Yes," replied Larcum. "You going there, too?"

"I am. I have to take a week of my vacation now, as the city editor has taken the time that I wanted."

"I'm afraid you haven't got your boss very well trained," laughed Scott. "He ought not to interfere with your plans."

"He didn't consult me," replied the reporter lightly.

"You don't think there's any likelihood of our train being held up, do you?" inquired John soberly.

"This train? No! You won't have any

trouble. No train-robbers would bother with such a dinky affair as this train."

The reporter spoke lightly, and, as he looked at Larcum, he saw that the young giant was keenly watching him. Whether or not he was surprised was not apparent in his face or manner. "You seem to be on the lookout for train robberies now," he added. "Perhaps that's only natural after your experience this morning."

"We aren't on the lookout for train robberies," suggested Larcum meaningly.

"What are you looking for?"

"The train-robbers," replied Larcum promptly.

"Where do you expect to find them? In the Yosemite Valley?"

"If we knew just where they are hiding, we'd put straight for the place. But, as we don't know that, all we can do is to keep our eyes open. The railroad people are certain to find them."

"Are they?"

"Yes, sir; the men will be caught," said Larcum confidently.

"Perhaps they've been run to cover before this time."

“ That may be; but I don't think so.”

“ They certainly have been seen times enough to let the posses get them,” laughed the reporter. “ It's said they have been seen in Sacramento, Oakland, Port Costa, and Mill Valley. The next report will be that they have hidden on the top of Pike's Peak.”

“ Or in the Yosemite,” suggested Larcum dryly.

“ Oh, they'll keep away from places where there are many people,” said John. “ They'll take to the hills or to the cañons.”

“ How many miles did Clearchus march, Jack? ” asked Larcum abruptly, as he turned to his friend.

“ It varied,” laughed John. “ Some days more and some less.”

“ We go through Sacramento on our way to-night, don't we? ” inquired Larcum, turning once more to the reporter.

“ Yes; I think we do.”

“ Don't you know? ”

“ It's so on the schedule. I've often been in the Yosemite. This is my first trip at night.”

“ The hold-up this morning was somewhere between Sacramento and San Francisco, wasn't it? ” continued Larcum.

“ You ought to know,” said the reporter; “ you were on the spot.”

“ There were two of the young fellows,” continued Larcum, as if he had not heard the assertion of the reporter. “ What would prevent them from separating—one going back to Sacramento, and the other keeping on to San Francisco? Then, if they should want to do it, why couldn’t they meet on any train that came from San Francisco through Sacramento? They might meet on this very train.”

“ Keep your eyes open and perhaps you’ll find them,” said the reporter lightly. “ If you should find them, let me know. I’d like to come in with you for a share of that reward. I’ll guarantee that the train-robbers are worth more as prisoners than they are just now—even with all the stuff they found in the mail-bags. When you get your plan all worked out, let me know. I’m tired and am going to bed. I have lower seven. ‘ Wake, and call me early; call me early, mother dear,’ ” he added; “ but don’t do it unless you are certain sure you have found the desperadoes.”

“ What’s the matter with you, Larc? ” asked Scott, when the young reporter left them and the two boys were seated together across the

aisle from the section in which Lee and John were sitting. "You act as if you thought that fellow had something to do with our hold-up."

"Do I?" responded Larcum shortly.

"You don't mean to say that you really suspect him?" exclaimed Scott.

"I don't mean to say anything—just yet."

"But you don't actually suspect him, do you?" persisted Scott.

"I'm not talking for publication," replied Larcum gruffly. "Come on; it's after eleven. Let's have the porter make up our berths."

"I'm agreed. Shall we flip a coin to see who goes 'upstairs'?"

"No. I want the upper berth to-night."

"That's good," laughed Scott. "We won't quarrel over a little thing like that. I thought I was booked for that upper, and you three fellows had the drawing-room. I'm glad to accommodate you, though I don't understand what has come over you. All the way out you growled every time you had to take an upper berth."

"I'm not growling to-night, am I?" retorted Larcum, as he pushed the button and summoned the porter.

The section speedily was made ready, and

Scott was the first to retire. Before Larcum sought his quarters for the night, however, he had a brief interview with the dusky porter.

“ I’m in upper ten,” said Larcum.

“ Yaas, suh.”

“ What time are we due in Sacramento? ”

“ Two-thirty.”

“ Come to my berth at two and wake me up. If you’ll do that, and don’t disturb the man in lower ten, I’ve got a brand-new silver dollar for you, George. If you wake up the fellow under me, you don’t get a copper cent. You understand, don’t you, George? ”

“ Yaas, suh,” replied the porter dubiously. “ But yo’ ticket is to El Portal. Is yo’ going to get off at Sacramento? ”

“ I didn’t say anything about getting off at Sacramento, or anywhere else, did I? ”

“ No, suh. No, suh,” responded the porter glibly.

“ I did tell you that I had a silver dollar for you if you’d wake me up at two without disturbing the fellow under me, didn’t I? ”

“ Yaas, suh. Yaas, suh.”

“ Well, that’s all I said. Now, if you want that dollar, George, you know just how to get it. Good-night.” Quickly preparing himself

for bed the young giant declined "George's" offer to bring him the steps, and lightly swung himself to his berth, where, without undressing, he lay down.

Promptly at two o'clock the porter came, and, carefully thrusting aside the curtains, roused the sleeping giant by pulling gently on Larcum's hand. "All right," whispered Larcum, as he roused himself, and quickly peered into the berth below him, where a man was soundly sleeping.

As Larcum did not leave his berth, the puzzled porter remained standing in front of the section, expecting to have further instructions given him.

"Are we on time?" whispered Larcum.

"Yaas, suh."

"All right then, George. Here's your dollar," he added, as he handed the porter a silver dollar. "Any one to get off at Sacramento?"

"No, suh."

"Thank you; that's all," said Larcum, as he sank back into the berth without waiting to see whether or not the delighted porter returned to the end of the car.

The young giant, however, did not fall asleep again—at least, not at once, for, though he was

lying quietly, his eyes were not closed. Occasionally he sat up, and, pulling his curtains slightly apart, peered at section seven, which the reporter had reserved. However, nothing unusual was seen there as the train sped forward in the darkness. Only one dim light had been left burning in the sleeping-car, but its aid was sufficient to enable Larcum to see if anything unusual should occur.

Promptly at half-past two the train entered Sacramento. Before it stopped the young giant was sitting erect in his berth, and, through a small opening between the curtains, he was eagerly watching the men that entered the car, when at last the train halted at the station.

In a moment three men came on board. One was an elderly gentleman, to whom Larcum gave no heed. A single glance at the second of the newcomers showed that this man was stout, so he too was neglected by the watching Larcum. The third passenger, however, instantly claimed his attention, for this man was young and short in stature.

“I have upper seven, porter,” the young man was saying as he halted in the aisle.

“Yaas, suh. Yaas, suh,” responded the colored man glibly. “There’s a gentleman al-

ready in lower seven. If yo' sees th' conductor, I reckon he might give yo' lower two. There's nobody in it, suh."

Larcum could hear every word, and, intensely excited, he was listening and watching with an eagerness that would have puzzled his friends if they had seen him.

"Never mind, porter," the new passenger was saying, "I'll take upper seven. That's the one I reserved."

"Yaas, suh. I'm afraid it'll disturb the gentleman in the lower berth——"

"Go ahead, porter," interrupted the occupant of the lower berth, as he thrust his head from behind the curtains. "Fix up this man's place for him. You won't disturb me."

"All right, suh. I'll attend to yo' direc'ly, suh."

The train already was moving swiftly. The porter retired to his linen closet, while the new passenger seated himself in one of the unoccupied sections.

At this time Larcum parted the curtains in front of his berth, and, grasping the long rod lightly, swung himself to the floor. Passing down the aisle, he peered at the young man who

had just entered the car, and was satisfied that he would be able to recognize the man again if he should see him in the light of day. The passenger was quiet in his manner, and apparently was not aware of the scrutiny of Larcum, although he glanced hastily at him as the young giant came down the aisle; but he quickly turned away his head and was looking out into the night.

In a moment Larcum returned to his berth, but he still did not lie down. Sitting erect, he watched the porter until upper seven had been made up and the passenger was informed that his berth was ready for him. The young man quickly responded to the summons, and delayed only to say to the porter, "When are we due at El Portal?"

"Seven-thirty."

"Thank you," replied the passenger, who speedily prepared for bed.

The car became silent, save for the monotonous rumble of the train, and Larcum remained in his sitting position for an hour or more, endeavoring to discover if the new passenger had any conversation with the man in lower seven. Not a voice could he hear, however, and at last, though reluctant, Larcum abandoned his vigil

and, more fully preparing for bed, was soon asleep.

It was daylight when he awoke, and, hastily dressing, he descended to the floor of the swaying train. Early as he was, he saw that Scott was dressed and seated in number two.

“ Sick, Larc? ” called Scott, as the young giant joined him.

“ Hardly, ” sniffed Larcum. “ Where are Jack and Lee? ”

“ Still asleep. It’ll take both of us to pull them out of bed. ”

“ Will it? ” said Larcum absently, as he glanced down the aisle at number seven, both of whose occupants apparently were still asleep, as there were no signs of life. “ Good-morning, George, ” Larcum added, as the porter approached.

“ Good-mornin’, suh, ” responded the porter.

“ Lose any of your passengers last night? ”

“ No, suh. Didn’t lose no passengers, suh, ” grinned the porter.

“ Anybody leave the car after we ran out of Sacramento? ”

“ Yaas, suh. Two gentlemen got off at Merced. ”

“ Did they? ” asked Larcum quickly. Rising, he stepped nearer the porter, and, in a lower voice, said, “ Was one of them the little fellow that got on at Sacramento? ”

“ Yaas, suh. He got off when we fust pulled into Merced.”

Larcum looked blankly at the porter for a moment, and then, turning to his friends, said: “ I’ll be back pretty quick, fellows. Keep a seat for me until I have removed certain superfluous portions of the state of California from the surface of my ordinarily spotless and delicate person.”

“ What’s gone wrong, Larc? ” laughed Scott. “ Early rising doesn’t agree with you, I’m afraid.”

“ ‘ Afraid! ’ ‘ Afraid! ’ I’m not ‘ afraid, ’ ” roared the young giant, as he turned away. “ I’m on the trail.”

“ Of what? ”

“ Don’t say ‘ of what ’; say ‘ whom, ’ ” said Larcum, as he left his friends. In a moment, however, before his morning ablutions had been completed, he hastily rejoined his comrades, and his face betrayed the excitement under which he was laboring.

CHAPTER IX

AN EVASIVE TRAVELER

“WHAT’S wrong, Larc?” inquired Scott quickly, as Larcum took the seat beside him. “You look as if you had caught the gold fever. I understand that the Forty-niners did some work along the Merced River——”

“I am excited,” said Larcum, breaking in upon his friend.

“What is it?” asked Scott, aware now that his companion was serious.

“You know, I’ve had my suspicions that that innocent-looking reporter, who has been dodging us ever since we left the train yesterday morning——”

“It doesn’t seem to me that he’s been ‘dodging’ us, Larc,” interrupted Scott. “He’s been following us more than he has been trying to get away from us.”

“Keep still and let me talk,” said Larcum, in a low voice, glancing about the car as he spoke. “I’m telling you I’ve been suspicious

of the fellow. Well, I got to thinking it all over last night before I went to bed, and the more I thought the more excited I became. When the porter told me that our train stopped at Sacramento, I decided that I would be awake when we got there."

"You thought the other train-robber might get on there and join this fellow? Well, you had your trouble for your pains, didn't you?"

"I'll tell you just what I did. I tipped the porter a dollar to wake me up twenty minutes before we were due in Sacramento."

"Did he wake you up? If he did, I didn't know it, and I had a berth in the drawing-room, not very far away, Larc."

"I know you did, and one of the conditions I made with the porter was that if he should wake up any one besides me, then every cent of that dollar stayed right in my pocket."

"That was thoughtful of you," laughed Scott. "Go on with your story."

"Well, the porter waked me up all right. I sat up in bed and watched when we stopped at the station."

"Did the other villain get on board as he ought?"

"A young fellow, a little younger than the

reporter, and about two inches shorter, got on board at Sacramento and had reserved upper seven. The porter told him he was sure the conductor could give him a lower berth, for only a part of the sections were reserved; but, no, the new arrival insisted upon being given upper seven."

"Is that true, Larc? Sure you weren't dreaming?" said Scott, sitting quickly erect and excitedly looking into the face of his friend.

"It certainly is true," replied Larcum quietly.

"What happened next?"

"The porter made up upper seven, for, strange as it may seem, the occupant of lower seven was awake, and happened to overhear the conversation between the passenger and the porter. Lower seven told the porter to go ahead and make up the upper berth, for it wouldn't disturb him in the least. He was quite good-natured about it."

"Naturally," sniffed Scott. "Tell me some more, Larc. What did you do next?"

"I sat up and watched. The new passenger asked the porter when we were due at El Portal, and then he crawled behind the curtains."

"Is he there now?" asked Scott, in a low

voice, as he leaned forward and looked at section seven, where the curtains were still hanging, showing that the occupants had not yet arisen.

“ He is not.”

“ What! Where did he get off? ”

“ At Merced.”

“ How do you know? ”

“ The porter just now told me he did. That was what stirred me up and brought me back here to tell you all about it.”

“ And you say he had a ticket for Merced? ”

“ No; I didn't say that. What I said was that I heard him ask the porter what time we were due at El Portal.”

“ What do you make of it? ” asked Scott thoughtfully. “ It looks as if he really intended to go on to the Yosemite from what he said to the porter. If he did, what made him get off at Merced? ”

“ Listen! ” replied Larcum, in a low voice. “ Suppose those two men really are the young fellows that held up our train. One of them might have gone on to San Francisco, and the other might have gone in the opposite direction to Sacramento.”

“ But it’s reported that they took to the hills.”

“ That doesn’t make it so, does it? The city might be just as safe as the hills, especially if the men separated.”

“ But how could they, or the one we met—the reporter—get a train? ”

“ He could do that easily enough. There are a dozen ways. But never mind that now. Suppose the two robbers agreed to meet in the Yosemite—that would be as safe a place as any for them, wouldn’t it? ”

“ I don’t know. It might, though I don’t suppose any place is very ‘ safe.’ ”

“ If they had their plans fixed, what would be easier than for one of them to leave San Francisco for the Yosemite, and have the other get on board his train at Sacramento? Then, it might just happen that they should agree as to which section should be reserved. One might reserve lower seven from San Francisco, and the other upper seven from Sacramento. That’s all plain, isn’t it? ”

“ Perhaps.”

“ Well, then, if that part of their plan should work out, it would let them get together and talk over the situation.”

“ But one of them got off at Merced, didn't he? ”

“ That's what the porter told me.”

“ Was it the man that got on at Sacramento, do you think? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What made him get off, then, at Merced? ”

“ Maybe they had had their confab and the reporter advised his friend to do that very thing.”

“ But why should he advise him to get off? ”

“ It would be so early in the morning—about four or four-thirty—that hardly anybody would see him leave the car.”

“ If they planned to go to the Yosemite, why should he get off at Merced? ”

“ I don't know; but it might be that the reporter had become suspicious and thought it would be safer for both.”

“ Suspicious? Of what? Do you think there are detectives on board? ” inquired Scott, glancing about the car as he spoke.

“ He might suspect us.”

“ Of what? ”

“ Of suspecting him.”

“ And that made the other one change his plan? ”

“It might. Of course, I don’t know— Here come Jack and Lee,” Larcum said hastily. “Don’t say anything to them about it yet. It will help keep this reporter man off his guard, and so help us just that much more. Keep your eyes open, Scott.”

“Did you ever see anything finer than this?” said Lee enthusiastically, as he pointed out of the window as soon as he and John had seated themselves opposite their friends.

“The water runs like a millrace,” said Larcum.

“We’re creeping up the grade as if we were climbing a hill,” said Scott.

“We are,” rejoined Larcum. “You have only to look at the torrent out there to see what a grade we have.”

“That water is as clear as crystal,” said John. “I wonder if there isn’t fine fishing in it?”

“There must be,” added Scott. “Mountain trout, too. My! I wonder what I’d do if I hooked a five-pounder?”

“I know what you’d do,” replied Larcum. “If you were wading the Merced, you’d be yanked into that current. You wouldn’t be able to keep your footing a minute.”

“ I’d like to try it, anyhow,” laughed Scott.
“ I believe I will, too.”

“ Not while you’re with us on this trip,” said Larcum decidedly. “ It’s against the law, and I don’t intend to have any of my friends go hang, along with the train-robbers——”

Larcum stopped abruptly and looked up, to see that the reporter was standing beside him and looking quizzically down at the boys.

“ Still harping on the train-robbers? ” he asked lightly. “ Haven’t you got over your scare yet? ”

“ I think we’ll manage somehow to survive,” replied Larcum quietly. “ I don’t think we’re half as much afraid of seeing them as they are that we might see them.”

“ They’ll keep out of sight all right, you may rest easily on that,” said the reporter lightly. Then, abruptly changing the subject, he drew the attention of the young travelers to the scenes through which they were passing. The swiftly-flowing river, with its clear waters sparkling in the light of the early morning; the bleak and towering hills that rose on either side; the sunlight that touched the peaks with glory and yet left the shadows still upon the valley; the bracing air; the exhilaration of the

moving train; the vision of the occasional humble little homes of the region; the interest in the journey itself to the wonderful valley to which they were going—all combined to impress the four boys and make even Larcum forgetful for the moment of the great schemes he was forming for the detection of the men that had held up their train the preceding day.

“ You know,” suggested the reporter as, without waiting for an invitation, he seated himself on the arm of the seat beside John, “ this is a part of the country into which the Forty-niners came for gold.”

“ Did they find any? ” asked Scott quickly.

“ They surely did.”

“ Is there any here now? ”

“ Yes, I fancy there is.”

“ I reckon the most of it is left by tourists, sir,” suggested Lee.

“ There are people who say that there is more gold put into the ground than is ever taken out,” said the reporter, with a laugh. “ Those old miners must have had some great experiences—especially when so many of their attempts didn’t pan out very well.”

“What does that mean—‘pan out’?” asked John. “I’ve heard the expression a good many times, but, though I fancied it was derived from some mining term, I never understood just what the words meant.”

“Probably it refers to the miner’s pan. You know about that, don’t you?”

“I don’t,” replied John promptly.

“Thank you, Jack. I was about to make the same remark,” said Scott soberly.

“The prospector—you know that is what the man who is looking about for gold is called—when he found a spot that made him think there might be gold in it, first cleared away the rocks and rubbish that might cover up his ‘pay dirt.’ Then he would take his pan, full of this pay dirt, down to the bank of the river, or to some place where there was water. He’d push the pan just below the surface of the water and then he’d begin to move it with his hands, with a rotary motion, at the same time tipping his pan a little so that one edge would be a little lower than that of the opposite side—if one can speak of the ‘side’ of a pan. In this all finer particles of the stuff in his pan would be carried off and the pebbles and little pieces of rock near the top would be washed, so that

he could see if there were any flakes of gold in them. Those that weren't any good were then picked out and thrown away, while the good ones were kept. The miner would keep the process going until at last he would stop and look for the gold that might have washed into the lowest inside edge of his pan. You see, the gold itself is heavier than the rest of the dirt and naturally settles in the process to the bottom."

"How many 'pans' could a man wash out in a day?" asked Scott.

"From thirty-five to fifty—sometimes even more than that."

"Did it pay?"

"That depended somewhat upon the amount of gold the miner found," laughed the reporter. "I knew a man who told me that he found a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of gold in a single pan."

"If one pan is worth a hundred and fifty dollars, and a miner can wash fifty pans in one day, how much will it cost him to walk back East?" asked Scott.

Ignoring the question, the reporter said: "Of course this 'washing' is the most primitive of all the ways of getting gold, and isn't

used to-day, when machinery is the proper thing. Next above it, I think, was the 'cradle.' This was a species of cradle, or sieve, such as some people use in sifting ashes. It took two men to work it properly—nobody ever worked it as well as the Chinese miners did—one to get and pour in the soil or gravel, and the other to pour in the water with one hand, while with the other he rocked the cradle. He had to learn how to use his hands this way—a good deal as a boy does when he rubs the top of his head with his left hand and pats his chest with his right. In the process of rocking the cradle the gold would go through the sieve to the bottom of the hopper and be caught on the 'apron' below. Of course, a nugget might be too big to do that, but the miner didn't mind a little thing like that."

"Did they ever find nuggets too big to go through the holes?" asked Lee.

"Yes; a good many times. All his neighbors within a mile would usually know of a nugget that had been found, for the miners' lungs were good. All these nuggets were dropped into a lucky buckskin purse and taken care of there."

“ Didn’t they have any train-robbers in those days? ” inquired Larcum soberly.

“ Here we are at El Portal! ” exclaimed the reporter, ignoring the question of the young giant.

CHAPTER X

COACHING

QUICKLY all other matters were ignored or forgotten as the boys grasped their suitcases and, as soon as the train halted at the little station, made their way to the platform.

“Where now, Larc?” asked Scott. “I don’t see any hotel.”

“Follow that path up the side of the hill yonder, and you’ll find the Del Portal,” said the reporter, who was standing near the young travelers.

“We don’t want the Del Portal; we want El Portal,” suggested John.

“One is the hotel and the other is the station,” responded the reporter.

“Then the Del Portal is at El Portal, is it? I don’t see any Del Portal, and how can I find the El Portal?”

“Keep on up the path and you’ll find it, all right.”

At once acting upon the suggestion the four boys turned to the winding pathway on the hillside, and, soon entering the roadway, in a few minutes arrived at the hotel, where eager porters seized their bags and led the way into the hotel, followed by the boys. In response to their inquiries, the boys were informed that a coach would leave for the Sentinel Hotel in the Yosemite Valley as soon as breakfast had been served. The suggestion was sufficient to cause the young travelers to register hastily, and then to enter the dining-room, where they secured a table and were at once served by one of the waitresses.

Glancing over the menu, Larcum said solemnly, "There's only one thing on this bill of fare that I don't want."

"What's that?" asked Scott, who was busily inspecting his own card.

"The date—June twenty-fourth. I'll take everything except the date," Larcum added, as he turned to the waitress.

"I'm afraid the hotel won't make much on our party," laughed Lee, "for I'm going to give the same order you did, Larc."

"Same here," added Scott.

"Your order the same?" asked the waitress,

who was laughing now, as she held a card before John.

“Not quite,” began John.

“Got any codfish and baked beans?” Scott asked the waitress.

“I’m afraid we haven’t, unless it’s on the bill of fare,” she replied.

“There isn’t anything like that on mine,” said Larcum, as he turned his card over and inspected it on both sides.

“I’ll have a steak and some French-fried potatoes,” said John. “I don’t want everybody in the hotel to come in to see the sight of our table heaped up with everything——”

“It isn’t ‘everything,’” broke in Larcum. “I distinctly told the waitress she might leave out the date. Didn’t I?” he added, turning to the waitress as he spoke.

“Yes, sir,” she replied smilingly.

“I’m ordering for a more simple life,” said John. “You may bring me the steak and the potatoes—oh, yes, I think I’ll have some of the mountain trout, some rolls and brown bread, some wheat cakes, and some marmalade and toast, some graham rolls, too. Yes, you may also bring me——”

“Don’t wait, Jack,” broke in Larcum.

“Just bring him the same things we ordered—and bring in the date, too,” he added, as he spoke to the smiling waitress.

“Yes, sir, I understand,” she replied, as she started at once toward the kitchen.

“What has become of our shadow?” asked Scott, as he began to peel an orange and looked about the large room.

“Our ‘shadow’? What’s that?” inquired Lee, following his friend’s example.

“The reporter.”

“Never mind him,” growled Larcum. “He hasn’t evaporated.”

“How long a ride is it into the valley?” asked Scott.

“The guidebook says it is twelve and a half miles from El Portal to the Sentinel House,” replied John.

“That may be true,” said Lee, “but the manager just told me it was fifteen, and every mile’s a good long one, too.”

“The longer the better,” said Scott lightly. “Did you ever breathe such air? I’d like nothing better than to take a tramp along the valley.”

“Where will you get him?” asked Larcum.

“Get whom?”

“Your tramp.”

“I don’t want any tramp. What I said was——”

“What you said was that you’d like to take a tramp along the valley. What I say is that you won’t find many tramps in this part of the country, so I don’t see how you’re going to take one into the valley.”

“Fellows,” said Scott, “I’ve got a conundrum: What is there brighter than the mind of little Larkie?”

“Nothing,” responded Larcum promptly.

“Correct, the first time. Nothing is brighter than Larc’s intellectual processes. Now, if nothing is brighter, how much less than nothing must be the brilliancy of Larcum Brown’s——”

“Quit!” said John. “You’re faint from hunger. You’ll feel better——”

“When our breakfast is served,” broke in Lee. “Here comes our waitress,” he added eagerly. “Look at her! She’s got an assistant,” he added, as another waitress, bearing a heaping tray, was also seen approaching.

“Everything but the date,” murmured Larcum. “Perhaps later we’ll have that, too.”

“There comes the coach!” exclaimed Scott,

a half-hour later, as a coach, containing four seats and drawn by four horses, swept up the side of the hill and stopped in front of the hotel.

“That’s too bad,” said Larcum soberly. “I suspect it is a trick to cut us off from having a square meal.”

“Hasn’t impressed the other people that way, Larc,” laughed Lee, as he looked about the room. “We seem to be the only ones left.”

“Lee, you need less food than any of the rest of us; you go and find out if there is to be another coach a little later,” suggested Larcum. “If there is, you would better reserve seats for us on that.”

“All right,” laughed Lee, as he arose and went out. In a brief time he returned and reported that there was a second coach, which would leave fifteen minutes later.

“That’s good—as far as it goes,” said Larcum. “I never like to start on a hard ride without first having had my breakfast.”

When the second coach arrived, Larcum, with apparent reluctance, arose and joined his friends, who were already seated in the rear seat. Clambering into the seat beside the driver, he looked back at his friends and said:

“ You fellows thought you were getting the best places, didn’t you? Well, let me tell you that you’ll eat more than the assigned peck of dirt before we arrive at the Sentinel. You’ll get all the bumps, too. Now, up here where I am, I have good company, no dust, and plenty of room. I haven’t given my humble services to the T. G. & P. without learning a few things and some besides.”

“ Trust you for that, Larc,” called Scott.

“ I wasn’t the first one in the coach,” retorted Larcum. “ If I had been, I should have saved a seat for my friends. As it is——”

“ Driver,” called Scott, “ how many people are to be in each seat? ”

“ Three,” replied the driver.

“ Then there’ll be room up there in front for another, won’t there? ”

“ Not this trip. You’ll have to stay where you are; I can’t have any one besides this big fellow here this morning. I couldn’t handle my horses if I did.”

“ Be content, my inexperienced friend from the provincial town on the shore of the North River,” called Larcum derisively. “ I understand your willingness to appropriate every good thing which some one else finds, but on

this trip you're to stay where you are—and where you belong—in the rear end of this procession.”

The seats, however, by this time were all filled, and, as soon as the porter had collected the tickets or fares from the passengers, the coach started.

Sweeping swiftly down the hillside, the horses soon slackened their pace as they slowly dragged the heavy load along the steep grade of the road. Indeed, the ride of the morning was a steady climb for the most part. The course led along the shore of the swiftly-flowing Merced River, whose rushing waters were, in places, almost as clear as crystal, and then again would be white with foam as they dashed around some huge boulder in the stream. On either side rose the towering and bleak hillsides, where steep cliffs and jagged rocks at times almost seemed to shut off the possibility of further advance. Little flocks of purple butterflies fluttered above the scant bushes. Occasionally the pungent odor of the bay bushes permeated the air. Wild lilacs—purple or white—were seen growing in the places where sufficient soil had been left by the rushing stream. And, through it all, the narrow road

led steadily upward. The progress of the coach was so slow that, when three miles had been made, every one of the boys was ready to believe that the miles were indeed "long," as they had been informed.

Clouds of dust were stirred by the toiling horses and the slowly-moving coach, and as Larcum occasionally glanced back at his friends in the rear seat, who were almost enveloped in the dust, he grinned appreciatively, but did not otherwise express his feelings.

The heat of the morning sun was reflected from the towering cliffs, and increased the discomfort of the travelers. At occasional places four- or six-horse teams were met and passed; but greetings seldom were exchanged. The ride was hard, but the grandeur of the scenery, as well as the promise of the majesty of the surroundings of the valley toward which the party was journeying, served to help the boys to make light of the present discomforts. "Every good thing in the world has its price," Larcum had said, when the four boys departed from San Francisco, and now, as he repeated the remark, the driver beside him said, "You'll get your money's worth as soon as you're in the valley."

“Everybody had to come by coach a few years ago, didn't they?” asked Larcum.

“Yes. They had to coach from seventy to a hundred miles just to get into the valley. The railroad has cut it down now to about fifteen.”

“That's enough,” laughed Larcum. “One of my friends told me that the cars had taken all the poetry out of the approach to the Yosemite, that one ought to come in by coach if he really wanted to appreciate what he saw. I think I'll do my best to be contented with the railroad. Where did the coaches start from in the days before the railroad was built?”

“Mostly from Raymond, or from Stockton over the Big Oak Flat Road.”

“Horseback wouldn't be so bad,” suggested Larcum. “Why doesn't the government fix up and water these roads the way it does in the Yellowstone? This is a national park as much as that is.”

“These roads are all right—for mountain roads,” retorted the driver sharply, for he did not mean to be silent when any reflections upon the region were made. “Besides, the government has begun to make appropriations. It won't be long before things will be better—though I don't find any fault with the road as

it is. Look yonder," he added, pointing to some overhanging rocks ahead. "See those rocks?"

"Yes."

"Well, they were all blasted out this spring. Some young fool cut his initials in the rock, and the government had to blast in order to get them out."

"Why?"

"'Why?' Because there wasn't any other way to do it. It's against the law to cut your name anywhere hereabouts. And it ought to be. But last year some fool tourist thought he'd leave his initials here. And that's what came of it. There's always somebody trying to spoil a place by advertising his foolness!" the driver added, in disgust.

Meanwhile the driver had been pointing out to his passengers the numerous waterfalls that could be seen on the steep sides of the cliffs. Strange formations that resembled the head of an elephant, a cat, a human form, and various other striking likenesses were also seen.

"Yonder," he added, as he called attention to a thin fall of water which was at least one hundred and fifty feet in height, "is the Widow's Tears. Any of you give a guess how the fall got its name?"

“ I guess it’s because the fall never dries up,” suggested some one.

“ No. You’re wrong. Those falls run just six weeks in the spring or early in the summer, and then they dry up. Get along!” he added sharply, to his horses.

For a time the coach was well-nigh hidden in the cloud of dust that enveloped it, but the discomforts of the travelers were speedily forgotten when the driver turned to them and said, “ In about ten minutes we’ll get our first view of the Yosemite.”

CHAPTER XI

INTO THE VALLEY

“THERE ought to be fine fishing in the Merced,” suggested Larcom, as he once more glanced at the river, its emerald waters tumbling and flashing in the sunlight as the coach passed more swiftly.

“I told you there is,” replied the driver shortly.

“What do you use for bait?”

“’Most anything. Those mountain trout are so savage that I’ve known men to have to run and hide behind a bowlder or a tree, or the fish would follow them right up on the land.”

“I believe you,” said Larcum soberly, glancing reprovingly behind him at his friends, who laughed at the driver’s words. “If there is one thing more than another that has impressed me since I came into this country, it is the incomprehensible, not to say multitudinous, dispensations of certain subtle and philosophical declarations as to the unified and indisputable

conglomerations of hyperbolean depreciations of the inherent capabilities of the indigenious anthropological and traditional estimates of the superabundant testimonials of the qualifications of earth and air and sky for the production of pristine and gigantic, as well as consecutive, memorabilia of transcendent and clarified declarations. Indeed, driver, I believe every word you say."

"You'd better—in June," retorted the driver, with a grin. "If any of the soldiers catch you fishing you'll retire from the world for a while."

"I appreciate your timely suggestion. The season is closed, so to speak."

"You're right it is."

"Do any of the inhabitants ever get a reputation for veracity?"

"They don't have any of those diseases now."

"They are to be congratulated. Who owns the Yosemite Valley?"

"The government."

"California or national?"

"The United States. In 1905 the State turned the park over to the national government. The Department of the Interior has

charge of it, and keeps two troops of cavalry here to look out for fishermen and anybody else that tries to violate the law.”

“ Did you ever think that it is not the law that is broken, but that the man who tries to break it is the one who is broken? ”

“ I never did.”

“ Thank you.”

“ You’re welcome.”

“ How did the State of California happen to be in possession of the park? ”

“ Congress deeded it to the State in 1864.”

“ How much? ”

“ The valley and all the land around it for about two miles—altogether there were about five hundred thousand acres, I’m told.”

“ And California deeded it back in 1905? ”

“ That right.”

“ How large is the valley itself? ”

“ The level stretch is about eight miles long.”

“ How high is it? ”

“ What—the valley? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Thirty-nine hundred and sixty feet above the sea level.”

“ And how high are the walls of the valley? ”

“ Oh, from three to six thousand feet.”

“ If a man should fall off the top, do you think he would be bruised when he struck the bottom? ”

“ No, I don't! ”

“ Why not? ”

“ He'd starve to death before he struck bottom. Go 'long! ” the driver added, as he cracked his whip and spoke to his horses.

“ When was the Yosemite National Park created? ” continued Larcum.

“ Eighteen hundred and ninety.”

“ Any bears here? ”

“ Only enough to eat the children. See that mistletoe? ” inquired the driver, as he pointed to some huge masses of the plant clinging to the branches of some of the near-by oaks.

“ Yes,” replied Larcum, as he and his fellow-passengers glanced at the plants.

“ What would you do if you should happen to meet a Digger squaw under such a bunch as that? ”

“ Run! These mountains are part of the Sierra Nevadas, aren't they? ”

“ Yes, the western slope.”

“ How wide is the valley? ”

“ From half a mile to two miles. You can

see for yourself now, for we're coming into it," added the driver. "Yonder is the Bridal Veil Falls, and almost opposite, on the other side of the valley, is El Capitan. This isn't the best view you'll get, but you can begin to get some idea of what you're coming to, if you look around."

For a moment every one in the coach became silent. The level floor of the valley seemed to be so shut in by the steep mountains that no exit could be seen. The bleak, barren sides of El Capitan were so steep that the summit seemed almost to hang over the narrow little valley. The misty fall of waters on the opposite side was as pure and white as its name. Indeed, the white and glistening mist made the fall much in the form of a bride's veil. The sight was impressive in its grandeur, and yet so beautiful and soft that its beauty was even more impressive than its height.

"How high is the Bridal Veil?" asked John.

"Six hundred and thirty feet."

"Sheer?"

"Yes."

"How high is Niagara, Jack?" called Larcum.

"One hundred and sixty-seven feet on the

American side," replied John. "On the Canadian they are not so high by nine feet."

"How wide are they?"

"A thousand feet."

"How wide is the Bridal Veil, driver?"

Larcum inquired.

"About fifty to seventy feet. The best time to see it is late in the afternoon, for then the mist is heavier, and you usually can find rainbows there."

"A cubic mile of water goes over Niagara every week," suggested John.

"There isn't as much water here," said the driver. "It isn't the noise or the volume; it's the beauty of the falls the people like here."

"Well, they've got it," acknowledged Larcum.

"Wait till you see the Yosemite Falls."

"Are they higher than the Bridal Veil?" asked Lee.

"Are they higher? Well, you just wait till you see them!"

"But some people say the Bridal Veil Falls are the most beautiful in the world," suggested John.

"I know they do," said the driver. "But

you mark my words—you wait till you see the Yosemite Falls.”

“ How high are they? ”

“ Almost half a mile.”

“ What? ”

“ I’m telling you the truth.”

“ A sheer drop of that height? ”

“ Almost. There are three parts—the upper fall is fourteen hundred and thirty-six feet, the middle, or the cascades, are six hundred and twenty-six, and the lower fall is four hundred feet—altogether the Yosemite Falls are about twenty-five hundred feet—almost a half-mile.”

“ I should think it would be all mist by the time it reached the bottom.”

“ There’s plenty of mist,” replied the driver, “ and plenty of water, too. You’ll see the water shooting down like rockets right in the midst of the mist.”

“ It must be the highest fall in the world ” suggested Scott.

“ It is—of any stream of its size.”

“ What is the stream? ”

“ The Yosemite Creek.”

“ How wide is it? ”

“ At the top of the falls? That depends on

the time of the year when you see it. Just now it's about thirty-five feet wide. Later in the season, when the streams dry up and a good deal of the snow on the mountains is gone, it isn't so wide, of course."

"I'd like to see it in winter," said John.

"You're right. It's a great sight then. Sometimes, if the winter happens to be unusually cold, the falls will stop every morning till the sun thaws out the ice which forms up there and stops the water. Usually, in the middle of the day, it thaws out again, and the falls resume operations. In the winter-time the sun doesn't shine more than about two hours right in the valley. I've seen a cone of ice five hundred feet high form at the foot of the upper fall. But wait till you see for yourselves."

"It must be great if it's more beautiful than the Bridal Veil," said Lee.

"I didn't say it was more beautiful; I said it was a good deal higher," responded the driver. "The old Indians that used to live in the valley never thought very much of the Bridal Veil."

"Why not?" inquired Lee.

"They thought an evil spirit was hanging 'round it all the time. You see, up there, back

of the place where the water breaks over the top of the mountain into the fall, the ground is all covered with a queer kind of moss. In dry weather it's perfectly safe for a man to walk right across it, but when the rains begin to fall the water creeps in under the moss and makes it 'bout the most slippery place in the world. When the Indians—specially the squaws—used to try to walk across, they'd slip and lose their footing, and then the first thing they'd know they'd find themselves carried toward the fall. The more they tried to stand up or to get away, the worse they would slip, and then over they would go, and they'd be carried straight to the bottom—more than six hundred feet."

"Did any of them ever complain that they were hurt?" asked Larcum.

"There wouldn't be enough of 'em left to try that. They thought there was an evil spirit up there and he got hold of the squaws and just carried 'em over the fall. Some of 'em even claimed that they could see the evil spirit with his arms all spread out, standing right there behind the mist, about half-way up to the top of the falls itself."

"Do you believe they did?" asked Larcum, in a loud whisper.

“The Indians can see evil spirits where a white man can’t.”

“So I have heard,” remarked Larcum grimly; “but I guess they don’t usually see them before the white men come. After they have poured the evil spirits into the Indian, the red man can see almost anything. He might be able to see that elephant’s head in the rock back yonder where you pointed it out to us. You aren’t troubled with evil spirits yourself, are you, driver?”

“The only trouble I ever have with them is when some of my passengers provide them.”

“The keenness of your ironical thrusts is Damascene,” said Larcum soberly.

“It’s what?” demanded the driver.

But Larcum was silent. The road was nearly level now, and the four horses drew the coach more swiftly over the sandy road. Great towering cliffs and numerous waterfalls on either side of the valley absorbed the attention of the deeply interested passengers. Far before them they saw a mountain whose crest was hidden by clouds. A strange formation of a mountain far ahead was noticed, which presented the appearance of having been sharply cut in two and only one portion left standing.

The floor of the valley was smooth, and its level surface was covered with brilliant flowers or grass of a deep green color. Tall trees were in abundance, although the mountain-sides were bare, like all the Sierras.

The exhilaration and interest of the four boys were already great, but, when a little time later they obtained their first glimpse of the Yosemite Falls, their feelings prevented further conversation. Over the brink of the precipice the white waters dashed with a continuous and deeply musical boom that sounded throughout the region. Impressive as was the sight, no one had given expression to his thoughts, when at last the sweating horses drew the coach alongside the piazza of the Sentinel Hotel. As the boys leaped from their seats, eager porters, with brushes in their hands, greeted the travelers and attempted to remove a part at least of the dust that had settled upon every one in abundant impartiality.

As he threw off his duster, Larcum turned sharply as some one spoke to him, and found himself face to face with the young reporter who had so deeply interested him on the sleeping-car the preceding evening.

CHAPTER XII

THE SENTINEL

“ I’M here before you, you see,” said the reporter glibly.

“ I’ve noticed that peculiarity of yours,” responded Larcum dryly.

“ It’s a part of my trade.”

“ Is it? I fancy that’s so. I haven’t been able to figure it out how you happened to be out there at that train robbery almost before any of us were there ourselves.”

“ Can’t give away trade secrets,” laughed the reporter lightly. To Larcum it seemed as if the young man was a trifle uneasy over the remark, but afterward, in recalling the interview, he was not positive that his own suspicions had led him to see what really was not there.

“ Great place this,” continued the young reporter. “ Ever been here before? ”

“ No.”

“ Well, there’s something in the first visit,

but usually, to take in the whole effect, one has to make a good many trips to the Yosemite. You can spend a day here or a year, and every minute will have something new in it."

"Will it?"

"Yes, sir; it will. This is my fourth visit. If there is anything I can do for you, don't fail to let me know."

"Thank you." Larcum's manner did not indicate that he was unduly impressed by the reporter's volunteered proffer, but he said no more, as he turned to enter the office, whither his three friends had preceded him.

"Come on, Larc, we've got our rooms," said Scott, as Larcum joined the group. "We have four rooms. That's what we gain by having a railroad man in our party. Your telegram did it."

"I'm glad you appreciate it—at last," said Larcum absently, for the young giant's thoughts were still centered upon the reporter, who so unexpectedly had been the first to greet him upon his arrival at the Sentinel Hotel.

Larcum was the first to leave his room and go to the piazza in the rear of the hotel, there to await the coming of his friends.

In a brief time the three boys appeared, and,

for a moment, all were silent as they gazed at the wonderful Yosemite Falls, which were in plain view on the opposite side of the valley, only a half-mile distant. The waters were white in the light of the midday sun, and the spray was almost like a shining cloud that provided a frame for the marvelous picture. The boom of the falling waters was continuous, increasing occasionally as what seemed to be an unusually heavy mass of water struck the rocks beneath.

As Scott glanced up at the lofty top of the mountain over which the stream was steadily pouring, he said solemnly, "There's one thing, fellows, that impresses me most of all here."

"What's that?" inquired John.

"That real estate must be very high."

"If that isn't New York for all the world!" growled Larcum, refusing to join in the laugh that greeted his companion's words.

"You aren't impressed by the grandeur of that sight. All you can think of is money, money, money! You'd like to buy the Yosemite and take it bodily to Coney Island!"

"Never mind, Larkie," said John soothingly. "If Scott can't appreciate the place, there are

others that can. I was reading yesterday that Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'This is the only spot I have ever found that came up to the brag.' "

"That's slang," retorted Scott scornfully. "Did Emerson use slang?"

"That's not slang—that's the truth," retorted John. "Can't you tell the difference?"

"Look at the Merced," suggested Lee, pointing to the swift stream directly beneath them. "See the trout?"

"I can see them, but the sight doesn't do me any good," said Scott. "We're out of season, and can't do any fishing."

"Suppose you can't?" said Larcum; "can't you find any fun in watching the trout? Do you think the only thing a trout is good for is to be browned and served for your breakfast? It's bad enough to come into the Yosemite and not be able to see anything but real estate, but to come here and watch the mountain trout in their native lair——"

"'Native lair' is good, Larc," broke in Scott laughingly.

"Well, where they belong, then—I don't care what you call it. A gun or a fishing-rod

wouldn't help me any. I don't thirst for blood. I can appreciate the beauty of wild life. Now, just look at those two divers," Larcum added hastily, pointing as he spoke at two brilliant-hued divers that were swiftly approaching, being borne by the rapid current. "There they go!" he added excitedly, as the two birds dove and still could be seen through the clear water as they sought their food on the bottom of the stream. "Up they come!" he said, as the birds together came to the surface, and then, with vigorous paddling, began to make their way upstream, moving steadily against the swift current.

"That's right, Larc," joined in John. "Why a man should want to break a leg or a wing of such pretty little creatures, I never was able to understand. I'd a hundred times rather see them on the river. They're just like boys—see them! They go up the stream and then come down on the current. Look at them! They must be coasting at the rate of twenty miles an hour!"

"That's what it is to be born without a drop of sporting blood in one's veins," retorted Scott.

"Sport?" What sport can there be in

hurting such beautiful creatures?" asked John.

"Oh, it isn't just the hurting. Nobody wants to hurt them."

"What is it, then? What do you want to shoot a bird for? What fun can there be in seeing a fish fight for his life? That's what he is doing, isn't it, when he has swallowed your hook?"

"I suppose so; but a fish doesn't suffer any," declared Scott.

"How do you know?"

"They're cold-blooded animals. They don't feel pain."

"So's a fisherman or a hunter. Do they feel pain if a gun goes off by accident and blows off a hand? Does a cold-blooded fisherman feel any pain if his hook happens to catch in his thumb?"

"You draw it too fine, Jack," laughed Scott good-naturedly. "It seems to be the way of the world. There! Look at that, will you!" he added, with a shout. "Those gentle little divers! See them there on the shore! They're after that poor little innocent frog. They've got him, too! See them! They're just pounding the life out of his frogship. Don't talk to

me if they sometimes get caught at their own game. They're trying to do to others what others are doing to them."

"They're only birds. Men know better what is right."

"Quit your talking. Come on down to the dining-room. I'm hungry as a bear," suggested Larcum.

"Just wait a minute," persisted Scott. "If you two fellows will agree not to touch a mouthful of meat or chicken or fish, I'll go with you. You know that it hurt the fish——"

"We'll wait and see how good they are first," laughed Larcum.

"Hold on a minute," said John. "Let's get one more view of the valley and these wonderful falls. A writer from New York once said, 'I might as well try to measure a rainbow with a two-foot rule as to take this in.'"

"If that's the way a New Yorker felt about it, then I reckon there isn't much left for the rest of us," said Lee. "I'm ready for luncheon."

"Garfield said, 'No one can study this valley and its surroundings without being broader-minded thereafter,'" continued John. "I recall, too, that Taylor wrote of the Yosemite: 'You hear the winds intoning in the choral

galleries a mile above your head; you hear the crash of water as of cataracts in the sky; you trample upon broad shadows that have fallen thousands of feet down, like the cast-off garments of descending night——’ ”

“ Enough! Enough!” broke in Scott. “ Magnificent! Sublime! Sounds like Lee’s oration for the sophomore prize.”

“ It is certainly very pretty,” said Lee soberly.

Scott, in silence, looked at his friend who had just spoken, and then said abruptly: “ Come on, fellows! After this we’ll need luncheon.”

As the four boys quickly descended the stairway and came to the piazza in front of the hotel, they all stopped abruptly as a band of a half-dozen Indian women passed in the road. The squaws were all short and fat, and not very prepossessing in their appearance, as they stolidly kept on their way without even glancing at the groups that were interested in their passing.

“ They’re Diggers,” suggested the reporter, who now promptly joined the four boys.

“ Digger Indians? ” inquired John.

“ What did you think, Jack? ” laughed Scott. “ Did you take them for Digger Mo-

ammedans? Or did you think they were Digger Russians?"

"They aren't very attractive, anyway," replied John. "Why are they 'Diggers'?"

"They live mostly on roots, acorns, and such things," explained the reporter.

"Well, there's one thing I'm thankful for," said Lee, as he watched the departing Indians.

"Only one? What's that?" laughed Scott.

"Do you recall those great bunches of mistletoe we passed this morning on our way into the valley?"

"Yes. What of them?"

"Just fancy meeting one of those squaws under one of the biggest of those bunches of mistletoe," said Lee, so solemnly that his friends all laughed.

"What I'm thinking of," said John, "is what I've read about the uplifting effects of magnificent scenery on the human mind."

"I didn't know there was any 'magnificent scenery on the human mind,'" said Scott solemnly.

"You know what I mean," retorted John. "I mean the effect on the mind of magnificent scenery."

"I'm still puzzled, Jack," said Scott, shak-

ing his head. "I didn't know that magnificent scenery had any human mind."

"You know what I mean!"

"How can I? I know only what you said."

"Well, I'll try to say what I mean, then. The effect which the sight of magnificent scenery produces upon the human mind."

"You're doing better, though I don't know that I've ever come in contact with any other kind of a mind than 'human.' What other kinds are there, Jack?"

Ignoring the bantering of his friend, John continued: "Now, if it is true that great mountains have an uplifting effect upon the people that behold them, please tell me why those Indian women we saw just now are so degraded and unattractive? I can't reason it out. By rights they ought to be beautiful."

"Perhaps they are—in somebody's eyes," suggested the reporter. "The original Yosemite Indians, however, bear out your theory. They were wonderfully brave and high-minded, and all that; I think one of the most pathetic things I know is the old Yosemite custom of burying their dead."

"What was that?" inquired John.

"I'll tell you sometime while you are here."

You're in too great haste for your luncheon now. By the way, you wouldn't think there were fifteen feet of snow in that little cottage up the street yonder, would you?"

"Fifteen feet? Now?" demanded John.

"This very minute," replied the reporter seriously. "I can prove it to you. Want me to?"

"Yes, I do. If you can prove it, I'll give you the best dinner to-night you ever had—or, rather, I'll treat you to the best the hotel can afford."

"All right."

"Not for me," said Larcum; "I'm for lunching."

"Go ahead, Larc. Save a place at the table for me," said John. "I'm going to see this fifteen feet of snow first. Why, the little house itself isn't much higher than that."

"All the same, there are fifteen feet of snow inside," said the reporter glibly. "If I don't prove it to you, then I'll provide the dinner for the whole party to-night."

"Come ahead," said John quickly, as he started across the street.

"It won't take but a minute, anyway."

"Talk about Jack's wonderful mind," said

Larcum, as he stopped a moment to watch his friend and the reporter. "He can tell to a dot how many parasangs Clearchus marched in a day, but he's the easiest mark in the Yosemite to-day. He'll feel pretty cheap when he comes back. Let's go into the dining-room."

A few minutes afterward John and the reporter entered and seated themselves at the table where the three boys were already busily engaged.

"How is it, Jack?" asked Lee. "Did you see fifteen feet of snow in that house?"

"I did," replied John soberly.

CHAPTER XIII

AN INTERRUPTED QUOTATION

FOR a moment John's three friends gazed at him as if they were puzzled by his sober reply to Lee's question.

"What's the joke, Jack?" asked Scott lightly.

"'Joke?' I saw fifteen feet of snow inside that house. If there's any joke about it, you'll have to find it for yourselves."

"Will you take me over to see it?" asked Lee.

"Certainly," replied John. "You can see it for yourself as well as I did." When luncheon had been eaten, Lee insisted upon going with John to see the strange sight of fifteen feet of snow inside a little house, which itself was not much, if any, higher than the supposed depth of the snow.

"Better not go, Lee," suggested Larcum. "You're too easy."

Lee, however, was not moved from his pur-

pose, and at once accompanied John across the street to the little cottage. Before five minutes had elapsed he returned, and, as he joined his friends who were seated on the piazza, he laughingly said: "You're right, Larc; I might have saved myself, but I didn't once suspect that Jack would put up any game on me."

"What did you see, Lee?" asked Scott.

"I saw fifteen feet of snow."

"Then where does the joke come in?"

"You might go over and see for yourself."

"No, thank you."

"Then I'll tell you. I saw Mr. Snow, who is five feet nine; Mrs. Snow, who is five feet three; and little Tommy Snow, who is four feet one. Altogether that makes fifteen feet of the Snow family, doesn't it?"

"Hold on to me, fellows!" shouted Larcum, as he leaped from his chair. "That is the hugest piece of funny business I've seen since I was a boy. I know my buttons will go, and I'll be threatened with that inextinguishable laughter I remember reading about in Homer. I tell you, Jack, that's better than the parangs of Clearchus. You hold me tight or I'll not answer for the consequences."

“ I saw a little house once that covered five acres,” said Scott.

“ Was it in New York? ” asked Lee.

“ It was.”

“ Go on with your story, Scott.”

“ I’ve told you the truth.”

“ You mean you’ve done your best.”

“ I mean what I say.”

“ That’s easy, Scott,” said John.

“ Is it? Then you might explain it,” suggested Larcum.

“ Scott means that the house belonged to Mr. Acre. It covers Mr. Acre, Mrs. Acre, and probably three little Acres,” said John.

“ Certainly! How cute! Splendid! More!” cried Larcum. “ Now, fellows, all I’ve got to say is that, if you keep on with this, then I’m going to do my traveling alone. I can stand parasangs and things, but I won’t be compelled to listen to witty remarks. Neither my delicate constitution nor my buttons will stand such a strain as that.”

“ Look yonder!” said Scott quickly, pointing to some Indians. “ There are those squaws coming back again.”

“ They look about as poetic, as the reporter said, as your jokes look funny.”

No one spoke while the five short, squat Indian women passed, without even glancing at the boys. Sullen, discouraged, and hopeless the bearing of every one appeared to be.

“To me that sight is tragic,” said John, as he watched the departing band. “This place was their home once——”

“Yes,” interrupted Larcum; “right here they could swiftly pursue the fleeing snails; here they might, with their fingers, dig up the fat and juicy worm; in this very valley they could pounce upon the fierce and savage grasshopper, and in each and every way thus secure choice bits of food. Bah! What’s the use in being sentimental? You wouldn’t have the coyotes here for pets, would you? You wouldn’t give the rattlers freedom to roam the valleys? You don’t believe buffaloes are better to have on the plains than cattle, do you?”

“All the same, the Yosemite Indians were a fine lot,” said the reporter. “I started to tell you about them before luncheon, you know. They made a brave fight against the whites, who finally drove them out. Some of the most exciting Indian stories I ever read were those of the Yosemite. There was old Tenieya, the last chief of the tribe—why, he put up a fight

that was as patriotic and as brave as anything I ever read in Greek history. There was——”

“ Did you ever hear of Clearchus? ” interrupted Larcum soberly.

“ Yes. What about him? ”

“ How many parasangs could he do in a day? ”

“ I don't know. Why? ”

“ Oh, nothing. All I meant was that I didn't intend to stand by and hear that this old chap, Tenieya, belonged to the same class with my old friend Clearchus. No, sir. By no means, and then some more! What did this Ten—Ten—what do you call him—do? ”

“ He died for his tribe.”

“ These Indians we have seen here don't look as if dying would be very hard. They look to me as if they thought living was 'most too much of a contract for them.”

“ What about the poetry of the Yosemite? ” asked John.

“ Now, see here, I can stand a good deal, but you'll have to excuse me. I came into the Yosemite Valley to see its grand sights——” began Larcum.

“ That's right, Larc,” interrupted John. “ Horace Greeley said: ‘ Of the grandest sights

I have enjoyed—Rome from the dome of St. Peter's, the Alps from the valley of Lake Como, Mont Blanc and her glaciers from Chamouni, Niagara and the Yosemite—I judge the last named the most unique and stupendous.' ”

“ Good for Horace! I always thought he had good sense. Not that I ever met him——”

“ Probably not, seeing that he had been dead about a dozen years when you were born. But, as I was about to remark, Starr King once said: ‘ Nowhere among the Alps, in no pass of the Andes, and in no cañon of the mighty Oregon range, is there such stupendous rock scenery as the traveler here lifts his eyes to.’ ”

“ Look here, now, Jack Field, I've never harmed you. I don't see why you insist upon doing me this way——”

“ That reminds me,” broke in John, “ that Samuel Bowles, the great editor of the *Springfield Republican*—the best paper published outside of Boston——”

“ Jack Field, your consummate, concentrated, contumacious conceit is beyond all that a man of ordinary intelligence can stand! ‘ Best paper outside of Boston!’ Don't you know the best newspapers in the wide world

are the Chicago dailies? Everybody knows that.”

“Not if he lives where he can see the New York papers,” said Scott.

“I reckon you-all never saw Atlanta or Charleston or New Orleans papers,” broke in Lee. “Why, sir, everybody knows that there isn’t anything like them in America.”

“Keep still. Let me talk. Let me get a word in once in a while,” resumed John. “As I was saying, the great editor, Samuel Bowles, wrote about this place: ‘The overpowering sense of the sublime, of awful desolation, of transcendent marvelousness and unexpectedness that swept over us, as we reined our horses sharply out of green forests, and stood upon a high jutting rock that overlooked this rolling, upheaving sea of granite mountains, holding far down in its rough lap the vale of meadow and grove and river—such a tide of feeling, such stoppage of ordinary emotions comes at rare intervals in any life. It was the confrontal of God face to face, as in great danger or sudden death. It was Niagara multiplied. All that was mortal shrank back; all that was immortal swept to the front and bowed down in awe.’”

“ Who said that, Jack? ” demanded Larcum sharply.

“ Samuel Bowles, the great traveler and editor of the great——”

“ He said he felt as if he was in great danger, did he? ”

“ He said that was his first feeling when he saw the Yosemite.”

“ Well, let me tell you, my little Bostonian, that he isn't the only one to have that feeling. You'll have it, too, if you dare quote what another great man said about the Yosemite! I'll throw you into the Merced River! Then you'll know more about ' the awful desolation and the transcendent marvelousness and unexpectedness ' than you ever dreamed of before.”

“ All right. Have it your own way,” laughed John. “ I'm just giving you the benefit of all my careful reading before we started on this trip. H. H., in ' Bits of Travel,' said, ' An indescribable delight took possession of me; the silence seemed more than silence——' ”

“ Hold on there! ” roared Larcum, as he leaped from his seat and seized John in his arms. “ ‘ An indescribable delight got hold of him,' did it? Well, I never have been called

by that name before, but what's in a name, anyway? What did I tell you would happen to you if you quoted the words of another man about the Yosemite Valley?"

" 'H. H.' wasn't a man," gasped John, struggling helplessly in the arms of the young giant.

" Oh, he wasn't a man? What was he, then? "

" 'H. H.' was a woman—Helen Hunt—Helen Hunt Jackson. You told me not to quote another man, so I didn't. She was a woman. 'Bits of Travel' is an old book, but I suppose it isn't known yet in Chicago. Let me go! Put me down! "

" Be good then."

As soon as John was released he began again: " 'The silence seemed more than silence; it seemed to quiver with sound just as the warm air shimmered without stir along all the outlines of the rocky walls. On my left rose the granite watch tower, Sentinel Rock; on my right, the colossal buttress, El Capitan. The Cathedral Spires, the Three Brothers—all were in full sight. Wherever I stood the mountain walls seemed to shut close around me in a circle. All sense of estimated distance was

swallowed up, obliterated, by the feeling of what seemed to be immeasurable height——’
Oh! ”

John got no farther in his quotation, for, with a bound, Larcum was upon him. Seizing the irrepressible quoter, he bore him quickly to the bank of the Merced, directly behind the hotel. Laughing, the other boys followed and loudly approved as the young giant, holding John by his hand, lowered him toward the water below. The water here was not deep, though the current farther out in the stream was swift.

“ Now, then, you Bostonian chatterer of other people’s words, do you feel as if an ‘ indescribable delight had seized you ’? ”

“ Yes! Yes! ” replied John. “ Pull me up; you’ll let me fall into the water! ”

Ignoring the request, Larcum said: “ Does ‘ the silence seem to be more than silence ’? Does it ‘ quiver with sound ’? ”

“ Yes! Yes! ”

“ ‘ Is all sense of estimated distance swallowed up? ’ ”

“ Yes! It is! Pull me up, Larc! ” pleaded John.

“ Do you ‘ hear the winds intoning in the

choral galleries a mile above your head'—à la Benj. F. Taylor?"

"I do. Look out, Larc, you'll let me drop!"

"Do you share Horace Greeley's feeling of the 'isolation' of the Yosemite? Do you feel the 'absolute wilderness of its sylvan solitudes'?"

"Yes! Yes! And a whole lot of things besides!"

"Do you still intend to tell us on every possible and impossible occasion of the 'transcendent marvelousness' and the 'awful desolation'——?"

"Never again. Now let me up, Larc."

"Where is the best newspaper in America published?"

"Boston!"

"Where?" demanded Larcum, as he lowered his friend until John's feet touched the waters beneath him. "I don't know that I just caught your answer. Where did you say the best papers are?"

"Bost—— No! No! In Chicago!" John hastily corrected himself, as Larcum suddenly permitted him to feel the water on his feet.

"You're improving. Do you know any more quotations?"

“ Yes.”

“ That’s bad. Do you now freely, voluntarily, of your own will and desire, solemnly promise never again, by word or act, to refer to them? Do you likewise cheerfully, enthusiastically, without malice and free from all guile, solemnly declare and affirm in the presence of these witnesses that never again will you decry, belittle, defame, or otherwise attempt to cast any slur on my home town? Speak up so that all can hear.”

John’s reply was lost, however; for suddenly Larcum lost his foothold, and instantly both boys were struggling in the swift current of the cold and treacherous Merced.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE TORRENT

BEFORE either of their companions fully realized the extent of the mishap, both Larcum and John were borne around the bend in the stream. The young giant was an expert swimmer, but his companion in misery was not able to swim a stroke. In places the water was deep, and John was carried swiftly through them down the stream. As he gained the shallower water, he struggled desperately to obtain a foothold, but the tumbling waters drove him hard against the rocks, and again he was swept forward, helpless, in the torrent.

Larcum merely tried to guide himself in the swift waters, and, as the current bore him in toward the shore, he seized some of the projecting bushes, and, though several times he lost his footing, he held on desperately, and at last succeeded in gaining the bank which was opposite the one from which he had started.

Breathlessly the young giant shook himself,

much as a dog does after a plunge, and then instantly turned to discover what had become of John. In a moment he saw his friend whirling and turning in the tumbling stream, and instantly Larcum began to run along the bank.

“ Help! ” he shouted. “ Come and help me! Get a pole! Get a rope! Come on and do something! ”

Without waiting to ascertain the result of his appeal, he continued his pursuit of his comrade, though the swiftness of John's movements in the water was greater than his own on the bank. Apparently John was helpless. He rolled and tossed in the warring stream, but as yet not one cry had been heard from him. The very silence increased the alarm of Larcum, and he sped forward with redoubled efforts. The bend in the stream enabled him to gain upon his helpless friend, and in a brief time Larcum was standing on the bank where the river was much narrower, and manifestly the current made closer inshore.

“ Work your way toward this bank, Johnnie! ” implored the young giant, as he saw his friend approaching. When no response to his cry came from John, and he saw that apparently his friend was either unconscious or com-



INSTANTLY BOTH BOYS WERE STRUGGLING IN THE SWIFT CURRENT.
Page 166.

pletely helpless, Larcum's terror increased. There was no time for accusing himself. If John was to be saved, Larcum realized that he himself must act and at once. At his feet on the bank he saw a long, slender pole. Instantly seizing it he leaned far forward as he held it out into the stream. It was long enough to enable John to reach it, and Larcum shouted encouragingly: "Here, Jack! Grab the pole! Grab it! I'll pull you ashore!"

A low cry escaped Larcum's lips when he saw John swept past the place without making any effort to seize the pole. A fresh fear now seized upon the frightened rescuer. Was John drowned? If he was still conscious, why had he not made use of the friendly means of rescue? Stifling the groan that almost escaped him, Larcum instantly turned and ran with increased speed down the bank of the roaring Merced. Another slight bend in the stream was just before him, and, rushing across the point, Larcum regained the bank just as John drew near. Indeed, to the frenzied Larcum, it almost seemed that the helpless boy would be swept past him before he himself could gain the bank.

Without hesitating a moment, Larcum leaped

into the river, but found himself too far behind John to be able to grasp him. Desperately the young giant began to swim with the current. The roar of the stream sounded in his ears like the crash of many waterfalls. The bank was rushing past him with the speed of the wind. Unheeding, almost unmindful of, his surroundings, Larcum was carried swiftly forward. Just before his outstretched hand was the sight of John, who apparently was unaware of the desperate efforts his friend was making to rescue him. With another mighty attempt Larcum managed to grasp the coat of his comrade, but for the moment all he could do was to draw John closer, and then the two boys were borne onward together. A huge rock bruised the leg of the young giant, but he was not mindful of any pain. His one purpose now was to keep John's head above the water. The tossing waves almost blinded his eyes. The roar of the river seemed to increase, and then Larcum felt himself thrown heavily against some projecting object. Still clinging with his left arm to John, almost instinctively he threw up his right arm and grasped the object before him. He realized that it was the trunk of a small tree, not more than five or six inches in diameter, projecting

from the shore into the current. The roots had been broken and upturned on the bank, and, as Larcum half-blindly became aware of the condition, his momentary feeling of relief was shaken by a great fear that the broken roots would not be able to stand the added strain.

In a moment Larcum found that he could easily place his feet on the bottom of the stream and that the water scarcely was waist-high. The bottom, however, was covered over with worn, round stones, and at first to gain a foothold seemed almost impossible, for the rushing current was so strong that even the young giant found it difficult to stand.

“Come over here! Come and help!” he shouted, although he was not positive that any one could hear his hoarse cry above the roar of the angry Merced.

Lifting John so that the helpless boy's head rested upon his shoulder, the young giant pulled upon the projecting trunk. As he came closer to it he suddenly relaxed his grasp and succeeded in seizing the trunk once more, this time a few inches nearer the shore.

“Lucky I'm on the upper side of this trunk,” he muttered, as he shook the water from his eyes and prepared to move forward again.

“ If I was on the other side, I couldn’t hold to the log with this current pulling against me. I wonder——”

Larcum stopped abruptly as the sound of a human voice came to him. Whether it was from upstream or down, or was the call of one of his friends, he could not perceive. Again the cry was heard, and, believing that it was for him, Larcum abandoned his effort to gain the shore and simply clung to the position he was holding. John’s face was above the water, but the boy was unable to aid his rescuer. Indeed, Larcum was not certain that his friend now was aware of what was occurring. Was John drowned? The startling suggestion caused him to look earnestly into the face of the helpless boy. The dashing waters covered them both with their spray, and it was impossible for him to be sure.

Again the call or cry was heard, and this time there was no question as to its direction, for plainly it came from below him. Vaguely wondering how aid could come from there, Larcum nevertheless took fresh hope as he hoarsely shouted: “ Here I am! Hurry! I’m afraid this old tree won’t stand the strain much longer! Come on! Come on!”

Soon on the bank before him Larcum saw three persons, whom he vaguely recognized as Scott, Lee, and the young reporter.

“Hold on! We’ll have you out of that in a minute!” called the reporter.

“I am holding on,” growled Larcum. “I don’t want to hold on forever, though!”

“Just a minute! Just a minute! Keep your head.”

Hastily breaking down a small sapling, the reporter seized it and ran swiftly into the stream until he was in the water up to his waist. “Here you!” he called sharply, as he turned to the two boys behind him. “One of you take hold of my jacket, and the other keep hold of him and hang on to the bank, too. Don’t you dare let go! Now, then!” he added, as he thrust the pole toward Larcum.

The end of the sapling was within reach of the young giant. As he saw that the length of the little pole was sufficient for his purpose, the reporter shouted to Larcum, “Can you hold on to it and not let go of Jack?”

“Yes, I can! Go ahead!”

“All right! Now, then! Grab it and don’t let go!” ordered the reporter, who apparently was calm in the midst of the excitement.

As Larcum released his hold upon the trunk of the tree, and with his right hand instantly seized the pole, the reporter was almost swept from his position. All three staggered for a moment, and then, as Scott and Lee advanced and together seized the pole, all three began to move back to the bank, drawing Larcum and his burden with them.

“Steady!” called the reporter warningly. “Don’t pull the pole out of his hand; he has only one free, you know. That’s right! Here we are!” he added a moment later, as he grasped Larcum by his arm. At the same time Scott and Lee grasped John, and all five fell stumbling backward upon the grass.

Quickly standing up, Larcum bent eagerly over the form of John.

“Stretch him out on his face, fellows!” he ordered, as, without waiting for any assistance, he drew John, face downward, on the ground. “His heart is going all right,” he added delightedly. “We’ll have him all right in a minute! Lift him up and let the water run out of his mouth.”

But John was not in such a desperate plight as at first his friends feared. He was suffering chiefly from exhaustion, and feebly protested

against the rough handling his friends were giving him. Chafing his chilled limbs, rolling him over and over, lifting him so that his feet frequently were higher than his head, the excited boys vigorously tried to restore their friend.

“ I say,” John breathlessly managed to whisper, at last, “ put me back in the Merced, will you, fellows? ”

“ Put you back? What for, sir? ” demanded Lee.

“ Because I believe I’d rather take my chances there than here.”

“ You didn’t have any chance in the river,” said Scott.

“ I know it, but I’d rather be drowned than pounded to death,” gasped John.

“ Throw him in, fellows! ” shouted Larcum, who was so delighted over the rescue of his friend that now, for the first time, he found his voice. His companions, too, laughed loudly in the feeling of relief that now had replaced their anxiety.

“ Brace me up, boys! Let me sit up a while and get my breath! I’m tired, that’s about all that’s the matter with me,” said John.

Quickly lifting him into a sitting position,

for which Scott provided the "back," the delight of all increased when it became manifest that their friend had spoken truly and that John was suffering mostly from exhaustion.

"Come here, Larc," whispered John, beckoning to the young giant.

"Here I am, Jack," responded Larcum, as he at once approached.

"Lean over, Larc, I want to say something to you."

"What is it, Jack?"

"His grace, the Duke of Sutherland, was in the Yosemite once. He said, 'This spoils one for any other scenery upon earth.'"

For an instant the huge Larcum gazed stolidly at his friend, and then, throwing back his head, he laughed aloud. "Doesn't that beat the world, fellows?" he demanded, as he looked at his companions. "Talk about grit! That beats anything I ever saw on the football field. Here is this Bostonian half-drowned, and yet he's not letting up a bit. He's still telling what brought on all his trouble in the first place."

The relief of Larcum was so manifest that his delight in his friend's renewed declarations

caused all who were present to laugh in sheer sympathy.

“ More, Jack,” said Larcum. “ What did Christopher Columbus think of the Yosemite Valley? What was Henry Hudson’s opinion? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Well, tell me what Clearchus thought of it,” persisted Larcum.

“ Oh, quit your foolishness, Larc! ” spoke up Scott. “ What we want is to get Jack back to the hotel, put him in bed, and get some dry clothes on him.”

“ Before I carry him back I want to make a declaration right here and now.”

“ Go ahead.”

“ Never again do I try any practical jokes. None whatever. No, sir; I’ve done enough to last one lifetime. You hear me? ” No one laughed at the serious words, for Larcum was deadly in earnest, as his manner and the expression of his face both proclaimed.

“ Hadn’t we better wait till one of us can go back to the hotel and get a cot or a litter to carry Jack on? ” suggested the reporter.

“ No, sir; not this trip,” said Larcum promptly. “ How did you get over here? Is there a bridge not far below? ”

“ There’s a bridge near the hotel,” replied the reporter. “ We can go back on this side and cross the river there.”

“ That’s the place,” said Larcum promptly. “ Now, then, I’ll be beast of burden and you can apply the proper name to me if you want to, and little Larkie will not kick, as his name and nature might imply. I’ll carry Jack on my own little back.”

“ Hold on,” said Lee quickly. “ Here comes some one on horseback. We’ll press him into the service. Hail the man, somebody! ”

As the boys glanced in the direction of the approaching horseman, they discovered that the reporter had left them and was running swiftly toward the rider.

CHAPTER XV

INVESTIGATING

LARCUM was devoting himself to the needs of John, and, as the reporter left the bank, he did not at first pay any attention to his departure. In a moment, however, as the reporter shouted that he would bring the newcomer's horse for John to ride, Larcum looked up. The recent rider of the horse was walking rapidly down the road, apparently having surrendered his steed to the reporter, and not even waiting to see what use was to be made of it.

As Larcum glanced at the departing man he saw that he was young, and something in his appearance or attitude served to startle the young giant. Leaping to his feet and ignoring the presence of his friends, he gazed long and earnestly at the departing man, though he did not speak until the reporter, leading the horse by the bridle, joined the party.

“ I have the horse for you,” he said lightly.

“ Now you won’t have to carry your load back to the hotel.”

“ Whose horse is it? ” asked Larcum.

“ I didn’t inquire the man’s name. I was satisfied when he told me we were welcome to use his horse after I had explained to him why we wanted it.”

“ That was mighty good of him,” said Lee warmly. “ Why didn’t the man stay? ”

“ I didn’t ask him. I’ve got his horse, and that’s enough, isn’t it? ”

“ What shall we do with it after we’ve taken Jack to the hotel? ”

“ Send it over to the barns—over yonder among those trees,” the reporter added, pointing as he spoke to a grove in the distance.

“ Is the man staying at the hotel? ” inquired Larcum.

“ I don’t know. I’m sure I didn’t ask him. Why? ”

“ I just wanted to know,” replied Larcum indifferently.

“ What difference does it make where the man is staying? ”

“ Not any, as far as I’m concerned.”

“ Why don’t we start? ” demanded Scott.

“ We act as if Jack wasn’t shivering in his wet clothes.”

“ That does seem like a good suggestion,” assented the reporter, with a laugh. “ Shall we lift you into the saddle? ” he added, turning to John as he spoke.

“ I think I can make it all right,” replied John, slowly rising. His effort was needless, however, for Larcum quickly stooped and, lifting him in his arms, gently placed his friend on the back of the horse. Without a further word, he at once took the animal by the bridle and started up the road. Lee and Scott quickly advanced, one to either side of the rider, while the reporter quietly took his place in the rear of the little procession.

Despite John’s protests that he was not in need of a bodyguard, each member of the party retained his position, and a little while afterward they crossed the bridge and soon halted in front of the hotel, where their arrival instantly aroused the interest of the people who were seated there.

Disregarding the manifest curiosity of the spectators, Larcum lifted his friend from the saddle, then turned to Scott, and said: “ You and Lee look after Jack. Take him up to his

room and get those wet clothes off him. Give him a good rub-down and put him in bed, and I guess he'll be all right by the time I am back."

"Where are you going, Larc?" asked Scott, in surprise.

"I'm going to take this horse back to its owner, or to the man who let us take him."

"No; I'll take him back," protested the reporter, stepping forward hastily. "You're all wet. Go upstairs and get some dry clothes on, and I'll take back the horse."

Larcum, however, instantly leaped into the saddle and quickly turned the horse into the road. "Thank you, I'm all right," he said lightly, to the reporter, who had attempted to follow him. "You're a bit damp yourself. You can get a change while I'm gone."

"You don't know where to go."

"Yes, I do. You told me, and your directions are perfectly clear."

"But you don't know the man that loaned the horse to us."

"Sure about that?"

"Why, yes. I think he said he had just ridden into the valley. I'm sure he said so, for he explained that he had come from Wa-

wona. He'd been spending a week or two over there among the big trees."

"How long did you say he had been there?" asked Larcum, in a low voice, and in apparent indifference, although he was looking keenly at the young man as he made his inquiry.

"Why, I don't know. How should I?" replied the reporter. "I think he said he'd been there a week or two. You don't know him, do you?"

"Somehow I seem to feel that I have seen him before."

"Where?"

"That I can't tell you now. Maybe I'll know more after I have talked to him. Good-by; I'll see you again pretty soon."

As Larcum rode away he glanced behind him, and the expression of Scott's face seemed to imply that he wished his friend to understand that he was aware of the meaning of his determination to ride the horse to the barns. The reporter, however, in an indifferent manner, at once seated himself in one of the piazza chairs, and, picking up a newspaper that had been left there, busied himself in its contents.

Up the road, across the bridge, then through the dusty road that led beyond the level

meadows to the barns in the distance, Larcum slowly rode. It was plain that the young giant was perplexed, and was trying to find some solution for the questions about which he was thinking. Before he came to the barns his countenance became lighter, and apparently he had decided as to the course he would follow.

As he approached the barn, and a hostler came forth to meet him, Larcum said, as he dismounted: "I was told to bring this horse here. Do you know anything about it?"

"Yes."

"Where is the man that owns it?"

"The horse belongs to the company."

"But the man just rode it over from Wawona."

"Wawona? Not much he didn't!"

"Did I say Wawona? I should have said El Portal."

"That's more like it."

"You are sure the horse came from El Portal, are you?"

"Do I know my name is Jim McGregor?"

"I guess you do. Where is the man that rode over on him?"

"I don't know. I guess he's in one of the

tents over there," replied the hostler, as he pointed to a group of tents not far away.

"Do people live in those tents every summer?"

"Yes."

"Parties that come into the valley?"

"Look here, young man, what do you take me for? When do you suppose people would live in those tents if they didn't come here? The tents are right here, aren't they?"

"They certainly are," laughed Larcum. "I was just wondering if the people in them were campers, that's all."

"Sure they're campers. Some folks like the tents better'n they do the hotel—say they have a better table and the nights are not so hot."

"The man that came here on this horse, then, is a camper, is he?"

"I didn't say he was."

"I thought you did."

"Well, I didn't. All I said was that I thought he might be."

"Can you find out?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"I'd just like to know—that's all," said Larcum. "Here," he added, as he handed the

man a silver dollar. "Do you think you can find out which tent he is staying in?"

"Yes, sir; I believe I can, if I try real hard," said the hostler promptly, as he thrust the coin into his pocket.

"I don't want him to suspect that you are trying to find out for any one besides yourself," suggested Larcum.

"He'll never know, no more'n the Sphinx o' Egypt."

"Good! Now, if you quietly can find out for me how long he intends to stay here, and whether or not he has any meetings with a young man from the hotel, I think I'll manage to find one or two more of these 'cartwheels' for you."

"I'm your man every day in the week! It might help, though, if you was to tell me what sort o' a looking man this fellow from the hotel is—I mean the man you suspect."

"I didn't say I suspected anybody," said Larcum sharply.

"That's all so, but I can see through a barn door if there's a hole in it."

"Don't let your suspicion run away with you. The man I'm talking about—the one from the hotel—is a smooth-faced, dark-eyed fellow,

about twenty-five years old, I think. He weighs about a hundred and fifty pounds. Not very tall, and has very white teeth."

"I guess that's enough. Shall I report to you at the hotel?"

"No; don't come near me at the hotel. I'll come over here."

"When? To-morrow morning?"

"Perhaps. You may see me here almost any time. I may come over this afternoon."

"Come when you please. If I have anything to report, I'll let you know when I see you. I'll keep an eye on the fellow."

"That's all I want," said Larcum, as he turned away, and at once started back to the Sentinel Hotel.

When he drew near he beheld Scott and the reporter seated side by side on the piazza. Both arose as the young giant approached, and, in reply to Larcum's question concerning Jack, Scott said their friend was in bed and sound asleep. "He'll be as good as ever when he wakes up, Larc. Going up to change your clothes?"

"I guess I'm pretty well dried out by this time."

“ Did you have any trouble finding the place? ” asked the reporter.

“ Not a bit. Do you know who the man is that owned the horse? I’d like to thank him for his kindness in loaning it to us.”

“ I didn’t stop to ask him his name,” said the reporter. To Larcum it seemed that an expression of relief appeared in the young man’s face as he heard the question.

“ I’m afraid he’ll get away before I have a chance to thank him,” continued Larcum. “ You said he was going on soon to Wawona, didn’t you? ”

“ I said he had just come from Wawona. I don’t recall any more than that, but I have an impression that he is not planning to stay in the valley very long.”

“ Is he stopping at the hotel? ”

“ Very likely. I didn’t ask him. Where else would he stay? ”

“ He might stop in some one of the tents.”

“ I don’t know anything about that. I guess he’ll understand that you are grateful to him even if you don’t have an opportunity to tell him. I explained that one of our party had fallen into the river.”

“ Our party! ” Larcum at first was inclined

to resent the expression. By what right did the reporter, whose very name was unknown to him, claim any place with the four boys? Repressing the words that rose to his lips, as he suddenly conjectured what the purpose of the reporter was, Larcum seated himself beside Scott and did not speak.

“ This man was telling me, Larc, when you came up,” said Scott, “ about the Yosemite Indians. He was telling me how they disposed of their dead.”

“ A live topic,” suggested Larcum dryly. “ They seem to have succeeded in disposing of them pretty successfully. They’re about all gone, I’m told.”

“ They believed in an evil spirit,” said the reporter. “ The good spirit was their friend, anyway, so they could trust him. In fact, they accepted him on trust, but thought they had to keep their eyes open for the evil spirit. The immortal part of each man was his heart. When a man died the evil spirit kept watch at the grave all the time, so that he might get ahead of the mourners, seize the dead man’s heart, and make off with it.”

“ I thought they burned their dead,” suggested Larcum.

“ So they did, and that’s the reason.”

“ What’s the reason? ”

“ Why, so that the watching evil spirit couldn’t get it. If the body of the dead warrior was burned, then the evil spirit couldn’t get his heart, could he? ”

“ No, I suppose he couldn’t very well.”

“ When it was known that a warrior was near his end, his wife or his mother would hold his head on her lap. All the relatives and friends were there, and they would set up a low, mournful chant, telling all about his bravery and what a good man he was. The last the dying warrior heard before he passed over into the land of spirits was the mournful chanting of his good deeds. When the warrior at last ceased to breathe, then the chant was changed to loud wailings, and every one present began to beat his chest with clenched fists.”

“ Whose chest did they beat? ” asked Lar-cum soberly.

“ Each one beat his own. Excuse me a moment,” said the reporter hurriedly, as he glanced up at a man who was approaching on horseback.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BURIAL OF THE INDIAN

“ WHERE are you going? ” inquired Scott of the reporter.

“ I’ll be back in a minute,” the reporter replied, without glancing behind him. He had walked to the end of the piazza in line with the approaching horseman; but, if he had recognized the latter, he had not betrayed his knowledge by so much as a second glance at the man on horseback.

“ Keep still, Scott,” said Larcum, in a low voice. “ Watch the fellow.”

“ What is it, Larc? ”

Larcum did not reply, but he was keenly watching the rider, who had now slackened the speed of his horse, which was slowly walking past the hotel. The rider was a young man, clad in the regulation suit of the traveler. He apparently ignored the two boys, and was glancing about him with the manner of one who was not familiar with the region.

“ Do you know who that fellow is, Scott? ” asked Larcum quietly.

“ I haven't the slightest idea. I never saw him before.”

“ I have.”

“ Who is he? ”

“ He's the chap that came aboard the sleeper at Sacramento and took ' upper seven.' ”

“ Are you sure, Larc? ” asked Scott, at once excited.

“ I am.”

“ Then you think he may be the other man that——”

“ Look at the reporter,” interrupted Larcum sharply. “ See where he's going? ”

“ Into the post-office.”

“ Now keep your eyes open and watch both of them.”

Scott's eyes assuredly were not closed in the minutes that followed; but, though he was keenly observant of all that was occurring, he was unable to detect any suspicious acts on the part of the young man he was watching. The horseman rode slowly along the road, and, to all appearances, did not even glance in the direction of the post-office as he passed the place. Nor did he increase the speed of his horse as

long as he remained within the sight of the watching boys.

As for the reporter, several minutes elapsed before he appeared once more upon the street, and then he leisurely turned toward the hotel, where he resumed his seat beside the boys on the piazza.

“ Ever carry a letter around in your pocket for a week or so and forget to mail it? ” he inquired, with a quiet laugh as he spoke. “ Well, I’ve had that letter ever since I left San Francisco. When I felt it in my pocket just now, I knew the only safe thing for me to do was to mail it before I forgot it again.”

“ Did you notice that young fellow who went past here while you were in the post-office? ” asked Scott quietly.

“ In which direction was he walking? ”

“ He wasn’t walking at all. He was on horseback.”

“ I don’t think I did. The sight of a man on horseback isn’t a very startling one in the Yosemite, is it? ” The reporter spoke lightly, and, as he glanced up, he saw that Larcum was keenly observing him. “ Why? ” he added indifferently. “ Was there any-

thing especially marked about this man to whom you refer? Had you ever seen him before?"

"I have seen him before."

"That's likely," laughed the reporter. "It's said, you know, that, if you stay in the Yosemite Valley long enough, you'll see here every man, woman, and child you ever knew, no matter where they may live. Was this man from the East?"

"What were you telling us about the customs of the Yosemite Indians in burying their dead?" asked Larcum quietly. "You were describing them, I believe, when this fellow on horseback came along."

"It wasn't the horseman; it was a guilty conscience that made me stop talking," said the reporter lightly. "I don't even know whether or not I should recognize him if I were to see him again. I just had to mail that letter then and there, or it never would get started on its way."

Larcum's manner, although he was keenly alert to all that was going on, did not betray any special interest on his part. Apparently now he was gazing dreamily at the towering cliffs of the Half Dome.

“Where was I?” inquired the reporter.
“Where did I stop?”

“You had the Indian dead, and the assembled mourners were beating their chests with their fists,” suggested Larcum.

“Well, the next thing the Yosemitees did was to spread a blanket on the ground and lay the dead body on it. Then a brother or some near relative of the late deceased would draw the dead man’s knees up toward his chin, place the arms down over the knees, and then draw a cord about them all, so that the body would stay fixed in that position. All this time the weeping and wailing were kept up by the assembled family and friends. As soon as the body was ready, the wailing all stopped. Not a sound, not even a whisper was allowed to disturb the scene. It must have been mighty solemn to see all those people sitting about the body of the dead warrior, not one of whom moved from his position or spoke.

“Then, after twenty minutes or a half-hour had passed, some one gave a signal, and every one instantly stood up. The women began to wail again and the men all turned to the work of building the funeral pyre.”

“What did they use?” asked Scott.

“ Mostly pitch-pine and oak. When they had the pile about two feet high, everybody became still again while the men lifted the corpse to the top of the pile. When this had been done, they piled on more wood, until all the body except the face was covered by the wood. There was not the slightest sound now, when the oldest relative of the late deceased, with a torch in his hand, stepped forward and set fire to the wood. When the first curling smoke appeared, that was the signal for the women to begin again. Their howlings were louder than before, but the men were all supposed to be silent now.

“ The nearest relatives had long sticks in their hands, and began to dance frantically in a circle around the blaze. As they danced they stirred up the fire with their sticks or turned the body over so that every part of it should be in the blaze.”

“ What was the special purpose of their yelling? ” inquired Larcum.

“ That was supposed to scare away the evil spirit who was watching his chance to carry away the dead man’s heart.”

“ But the heart was burning, wasn’t it? ”

“ Yes; but it was leaving that place, you understand, for the happy hunting-grounds; and

there was danger that the evil spirit—he was watching all the time—might grab it and make off with it. When the bad spirit was distracted by the noise, that gave the man's heart a chance, you see. It could dodge the old boy and so get away in safety to the happy hunting-grounds.

“When the body was almost burned up, what remained of it was carefully taken from the fire and rolled up in one of the best blankets the family had. The wives of the dead warrior, or some of his nearest relatives, carefully separated the parts——”

“Parts of what?” interrupted Scott.

“Parts of the body that were not burned up. Each separate part was rolled up in a string of beads or some other valuable possession. Next, this blanket, with its contents, was put in a basket which had been especially made for the occasion. This blanket, and perhaps the dead warrior's bows and arrows, his headdress, cloths, or anything else that he had particularly valued, were all put on the fire and burned up.”

“Any more jubilant wailings?” asked Lar-cum.

“Not at the time. When the fire had done its work, some of the ashes were separated and

kept for mourning purposes, while all the rest were brushed or even scraped together, placed in a basket, and buried."

"What became of the mourning ashes?" inquired Scott.

"They were mixed with pitch and spread on the faces of the female relatives of the late lamented."

"And the men were allowed to go free?"

"Yes; but the squaws, especially the old ones, seemed to glory in their appearance. They used to spread the pitch and ashes from their cheeks to their ears. They never washed it off—they let it wear off."

"How long did that take?"

"Generally about six months."

"So soon?" asked Larcum solemnly.

"That's the story."

"I thought when those Digger ladies passed us they might be in mourning, but I had no idea it was for six months only. If one could judge from appearances, they had been wearing their mourning for some of the braves that fell in battle with the Forty-niners."

"Larc, you haven't a spark of sympathy or sentiment in your make-up," said Scott sharply, although he laughed as he spoke.

“ Now, for my part, I think there is something fine-grained and poetic in the way the Yosemitees mourned for their dead.”

“ So do I,” said Larcum, rising as he spoke. “ I think they were far ahead of us. Just look at us. We have hired singers to sing for us; men hired to speak for us; and hired black plumes, black horses, black clothes, and I don’t know what all. To me it’s all as heathenish as the custom of the Yosemitees, and a good deal less beautiful. Why can’t they let a man’s family, who are the only ones really to care, put away their dead in quiet? Then, too, what do our women want to wrap themselves up in black for? Just to advertise to the world—that doesn’t care a rap about it—how badly they feel! We think we’re more civilized than the poor Yosemitees. Bah! We’re as heathenish as they are. All the difference is that we are used to ours, that’s all! Scott,” the young giant abruptly added, “ do you know what I’m going to do now? ”

“ I haven’t the remotest idea, and, what’s more, I don’t believe you have, either.”

“ I am about to engage in two stupendous enterprises. The first is to ascertain the present condition of John Adams Field, Jr.; and the

next, if his condition is satisfactory, is that I intend to walk over to the Yosemite Falls. I want to get under them."

"You'll get wet," suggested the reporter.

"Is it so?"

"It certainly is. The spray is like a heavy rain."

"Well, I'm not yet dry, so that won't bother me any," said Larcum, as he at once departed for John's room, where he found his friend sleeping soundly.

"Jack's all right," said Lee, who had remained to look after John's wants. "He insisted that he was going to get up and dress, but I finally persuaded him to stay in bed. He'll be as lively as ever when he has had a good nap."

"He seems to be doing fairly well," said Larcum, as he looked at his sleeping companion. "The sounds he makes are certainly normal and are not indicative of unnatural weakness or an early demise. Come on, Lee."

"Where are you going?"

"Going over to the falls. I want to get a good look up under them."

"Will it be all right to leave Jack?" asked Lee, hesitating a moment.

“He’s speaking for himself,” laughed Larcum, as John’s deep breathing became still more audible.

“All right, I’ll be with you in a minute,” responded Lee.

When the three boys departed from the hotel, the reporter at once joined them without waiting for the formality of an invitation. Larcum winked solemnly at his friends, but, as no protest was made, the three boys and their uninvited companion were soon walking along the path across the meadows, on their way to the great falls, whose booming waters sounded still more loudly as the boys drew near.

“Stop a minute, boys,” said the reporter. “I want you to get a good view of what shuts in the valley. Up yonder is El Capitan. That bare cliff is more than seven thousand feet high. It is not the highest part of the cañon walls, but it certainly is worth looking at. Off to the east of El Capitan, those three peaks are the Three Brothers—I’ll tell you about them sometime—I mean the story of how they got their name. That solid wall of rock yonder beyond the falls is the Royal Arches. Looks as if one could step over the edge and go straight to the bottom

of the valley. Half Dome, that peak off there to the south that looks as if it had been cut in two by a cheese-knife, is, next to El Capitan, the most wonderful feature you'll see, as far as the rocks are concerned. It's more than a mile and a half high."

"Do people climb it now?" asked Lee, as he gazed at the wondrous sight.

"No, not now; though it has been done. About thirty-five years ago a man named Anderson scaled it to its summit. He went up the other side of it. He drove in pegs and fastened a rope to them, but the rope and pegs are all gone now."

"I don't see how he could go up the way you said," suggested Larcum, "though I can see how he could come down."

"Don't spoil a good story by asking too many questions, Larc," said Scott.

"Yonder is Sentinel Dome, and off there is Sentinel Rock," continued the reporter. "Tomorrow, if you want to, we can get horses or donkeys and go up to Glacier Point—that rock up there which hangs right out over the valley."

"That's good," said Larcum hastily. "I'll stop at the barns now and arrange for the don-

keys. You go on. I'll soon catch up with you."

As Larcum started toward the barn he smiled grimly when he glanced behind him and saw that the reporter had left the boys and was following him.

CHAPTER XVII

UNDER THE FALLS

“ THIS isn’t the way to the falls! ” called the reporter, before he overtook Larcum. “ This road will take you back to the hotel.”

“ That’s all right. I just wanted to stop at the barns a minute,” answered Larcum.

“ What for? ”

“ We’ll want to arrange for horses and donkeys for to-morrow.”

“ Where are you going to-morrow? ”

“ Glacier Point.”

“ You can make all the arrangements right at the Sentinel Hotel.”

“ I fancy that’s so, but there’s no harm in looking at the animals. It will take something of a horse to carry me.”

An expression of apparent relief appeared on the reporter’s face, but he still continued on his way beside the young giant. Larcum did not speak, and in a brief time they arrived at the barns. Horses and donkeys were moving

about in the paddock, but, as Larcum looked about him, he was unable to find the hostler with whom he had had his conversation. Nor was he able to see the horse that had carried John back to the hotel after the rescue from the river. The failure to discover either was somewhat puzzling; but Larcum was soon conversing with another hostler, and selected the two horses and the two donkeys that were to be used the following day. The reporter remained beside him throughout the interview, although he did not take any part in the conversation—not even when Larcum limited the number of horses required to the party of four boys.

“Come on. We’ll go back now and join the other fellows,” he said, as he turned away.

“I’m afraid you’ll be too late to get much good out of the falls this afternoon,” suggested the reporter. “The sun has a way of getting behind those hills on the west long before you expect it to.”

“If we can’t do it to-day, then we can some other day.”

“That’s good philosophy, but it doesn’t always work in the Yosemite. Sometimes in the winter here—I don’t know but I told you—the sun doesn’t shine for more than two hours a day

in the valley. It doesn't seem possible that those falls could stop running in the winter. They do, though. The water will freeze back of the place where it jumps over the precipice, and there won't be a drop of water coming over the border until the sun is up and the ice has been melted."

"Strange," said Larcum, as he glanced once more toward the tremendous fall of water, whose roar steadily increased in volume as the boys drew nearer. In reality, however, the young giant's thoughts were more of matters with which the sight before him had nothing more to do than the volume of water and the roar that was steadily becoming louder.

Lee and Scott were overtaken as the path entered a grove of pines, and, in reply to the questions of his friends, Larcum explained that he had stopped at the stables to select horses for the following morning.

"Here we are," said the reporter, as the little party came to the border of a tumbling, roaring little stream. "This is a part of the water that comes over the falls."

"It's like rain," said Lee, as the air seemed to be filled with the penetrating mist.

"It isn't so much as it will be. Look yonder

—there comes a man who, from his appearance, must have been up under the fall. He's as wet as if he'd come down with the stream. I know who it is," the reporter quickly added. "That's Mr. Tinklepaugh. He's the owner of one of the richest mines in the West. And, think of it, when he came out here ten years ago he had only his two bare hands."

"How many has he now?" inquired Scott soberly.

"Nobody knows. It's reported, though, that he's got at least ten million."

"Ten million hands? Why, he's worse than a centipede!"

"You know what I mean. He's worth ten millions of dollars."

"But you said he came out here with two hands, and now he has a million. I call that pretty good work," said Scott.

"All right. Have it your own way," laughed the reporter. "Now, then, we'll have to be careful. These rocks are slippery and the spray is so dense it is almost impossible to see through it. Do you want me to lead the way?"

"I reckon we won't want much of any leaders," said Lee, as he wiped the trickling

moisture from his face. "It's every man for himself. How far up can we go?"

"Up to the foot of these lower falls. You'll think that is far enough before we're there. Any time any one of you wants to go back, just speak up, and we'll take the back trail."

"Speak for yourself," growled Larcum.

"You're wet through, Larc," said Scott.

"What of it? I haven't been really dry since I came out of the Merced."

"You're as wet as Larc is, Scott," suggested Lee.

"And you're no better off than either of us."

"I reckon that's so, but I don't mind it. Isn't this about the wildest and greatest you ever saw?" Lee added enthusiastically.

"It certainly is—when I can see it for the water on my face. We're all wet to the skin, and it won't hurt us any more now if we keep straight on."

"This way!" called the reporter, who was in advance of the little party. "Mind your footing there! The rocks are wet and slippery."

"That fellow won't let even the Yosemite

Falls drown him out," said Larcum to Lee, who was close behind him. " Might drown his body, but it never could drown out his voice. It's like the roar of the falls."

Conversation now became impossible. The roar of the falling waters was almost deafening. The air was so full of heavy mist that drops like rain were falling, and little streams were trickling down the faces of the boys. The trail became less clearly defined and required the undivided attention of the young travelers as they followed the reporter, who still was leading the way. The coolness in the spaces between the jutting rocks was like that of some huge ice chest.

As Larcum at last looked up he saw that the reporter had stopped, and, when the boys joined him, he said: " This is about as far as we can go. Look up."

Above them the boys saw the great masses of water steadily pouring down into the abyss. Clouds of spray, glistening in the light of the afternoon sun were above them and about them. The wild beauty of the falls, the glistening rocks, the dripping stones, the massive walls, as well as the ceaseless thunder of the stream as it dashed upon the stones, all combined to make

of the scene one of the most impressive upon which the young travelers had ever looked. For a few minutes they remained standing in silence as they gazed at the marvelous sight; then, at a shout from their leader, they all turned and retraced their way. Caution was required in the descent, for the rocks were wet and slippery. When they were once more safe in the grove below, they stopped and again looked up at the impressive scene.

“How high did you say these falls are?” asked Scott of the reporter.

“The lower falls are four hundred feet.”

“The whole three make up twenty-five hundred, don’t they?”

“Yes, the highest falls in the world—that is, of any falls that have anything like the same volume of water.”

“Lee,” laughed Scott, “why don’t you say they are ‘pretty’? That’s the word you use in the South, isn’t it?”

“They are,” replied Lee simply.

“‘Pretty,’ man! Why, they’re grand, stupendous, magnificent, sublime, transcendent, impressive, overwhelming, vast, overpowering, awe-inspiring—but don’t call them ‘pretty.’”

“I won’t,” laughed Lee.

“That’s a good boy.”

“I wouldn’t even apply that word to you, Scott,” added Lee. “If you could see yourself as others see you, you’d think those wonderful adjectives would be as appropriate as they would be for a drowned rat.”

“I am a trifle damp, that’s a fact,” admitted Scott, as he glanced ruefully at his dripping clothing. “Still, it’s worth all it cost, even if it did take the crease out of my trousers.”

“That’s the highest price a New Yorker can pay for anything,” sniffed Larcum.

“Well, when you people in Chicago learn to have your trousers made by a real tailor, you’ll understand how we feel,” retorted Scott. “Of course, as long as you tuck the bottoms of your trousers inside the tops of your cowhide boots, you’ll never know.”

“There’s an ice cone forms there at the base of the lower falls every winter,” suggested the reporter.

“How high?” inquired Scott.

“Five hundred feet.”

“Have you ever seen it?”

“Yes, twice. I have been up here in the Yosemite two winters.”

“ Plenty of snow here then, too, isn’t there? ” asked Lee.

“ Lots of it. You have to dig your way then.”

“ Keep still, fellows; let me get in a word once in a while, will you? I’ve got a conundrum,” broke in Larcum.

“ We’ll give it up before you ask it, Larc,” retorted Scott.

“ What kind of a physician ought to visit the Yosemite Valley in the winter? ” asked Larcum.

“ No kind,” answered Scott promptly. “ Haven’t we been told already that nobody out here dies a natural death? The climate won’t permit it. If that’s so, then no physician will be needed here, winter or summer. Your conundrum is no good.”

“ What kind of a physician will most enjoy a trip to the Yosemite when the snow is deep in the valley? I’ll put it that way, then,” said Larcum, ignoring what his friend had said. “ I want to bring it down to the level of every one—and Scott Gordon.”

“ I say the one who is an allopath,” suggested Lee.

“ No. You’re wrong, Lee.”

“ I suppose you mean, then, the man who can hoe-me-a-path, don't you, Larc? ” asked Scott.

“ Good! Good for you, Scott! ” shouted Larcum. “ I wouldn't have believed it. ”

“ If I had biceps like yours, Larc, and a little of your weight, I'd soon show you that you couldn't treat your best friends that way, ” said Scott, in mock solemnity. “ Who'd think a great prize-ox like Larc could ever think out such a cute little pun as that? I think the altitude has affected your mind. You'd better find and consult your homeo-path—— ”

“ Oh, there's nothing the matter with me, ” retorted Larcum. “ I'm having a—— ”

The young giant did not continue, however, for instantly his two friends started after him, and the chase was not slackened until at last the boys were once more in the sandy road that led back to the hotel.

“ I wonder what either of you fellows would do in a dark night if a man like me took after you? ” laughed Larcum. “ You couldn't run away from him, for he could outrun you both. What would you do, fellows? ”

“ Make him run. ”

“ Yes, if you had a gun.”

“ I don’t mean that. If I should get off one of your little puns, that would fix him.”

“ Lee, you stay here and wait for the reporter,” said Larcum abruptly. “ I want to go over to the barn again, and I’ll make Scott go with me.”

“ All right, sir. You can’t hurt my feelings that way,” said Lee promptly, as he seated himself by the roadside.

“ Scott,” said Larcum, when he and his friend were on their way to the stables, “ don’t you think we have found out enough about this reporter and his friend to write the railroad people? ”

“ You want them to send some men up here—and arrest them? ” inquired Scott. “ I don’t know about that.”

“ Well, I do. I have a lot of sympathy for the company.”

“ I have more for the passengers,” laughed Scott.

“ You needn’t whine. You didn’t lose anything.”

“ I’m not whining. I never was happier.”

“ Well, come on with me to the stables. I’d like to see that hostler again. If he’s there, I’ll

know what to do about writing the company. If these two fellows are train-robbers, we don't want them to be left at large, to try their scheme on any more innocent travelers. Come on, Scott; come on!"

CHAPTER XVIII

A NIGHT LETTER

THE visit to the stables, however, failed to reveal the presence of the hostler whom Larcum was desirous of seeing. In response to his inquiries, he was informed that "Jim was somewhere about," but no one appeared able to locate him exactly. "He'd be back pretty soon," did not satisfy the boys.

"We won't wait," said Larcum to his companion. "Come on; we'll join the others at the bridge."

"Going to write to the railway people, Larc?" inquired Scott, as the two boys followed the dusty road.

"Yes. I'd have been glad to see the hostler again before I wrote, but I think I'd better not wait any longer."

"You feel sure that you have enough to warrant you in writing, do you?"

"You can see the facts as well as I can."

"I don't know that I can. What are they? Say them over again to me."

“ Well, first of all, the reporter was almost on the spot when the train was held up. Then he——”

“ That isn’t anything of itself so very suspicious,” broke in Scott. “ He’s an enterprising chap, even you’ll have to acknowledge that. We weren’t very far out from San Francisco, and a live reporter wouldn’t let very much grass grow under his feet before he’d be on hand with notebook and pencils.”

“ That’s all right. If that was the only thing, there might be some sense in what you say, but it isn’t. There’s his dogging us in San Francisco; there’s his following us into the Yosemite; there’s the man who engaged the upper berth in this fellow’s section on the sleeper, and the fact that he got off before the train pulled into El Portal mustn’t be forgotten, either. Then the same fellow shows up here a little later and doesn’t put up at the hotel; he rides past the Sentinel, and ‘ as he goes on ’ our reporter suddenly has important business at the post-office, to say nothing of his disappearance since—and his horse isn’t any longer in the stable. Why, Scott, even the hostler who had that talk with me has evaporated. It isn’t that there’s so much in any one of these points,

but, taken altogether, the sum of them seems to me to mean a good deal. At any rate, they make enough to warrant me in writing the company. I can give them the facts, can't I? They can do what they please with them after they've got them."

"Do you remember what Cæsar said?"

"Not much, and I can't say I'm sorry, either. What did J. Cæsar say?"

"'Men believe that which they wish to believe.'"

"Did Cæsar say that?"

"Yea."

"He isn't so far off the track as I thought he was when I read all his stuff about the Helvetii, and 'all Gaul,' and all that sort of thing, you know. No, I'm not forgetting Julius' point. I've thought of all that. But I still believe there's enough to make it worth while for me to send a lettergram to-night to the company."

"Suppose these two fellows do turn out to be the terrible train-robbers. What then? Where do you come in, Larc?"

"I hadn't thought very much about that."

"But the company has offered a reward of five thousand dollars, hasn't it?"

“That’s right. I’d almost forgotten that part of it.”

“Well, when you come into your fortune, don’t forget the rest of us.”

“I won’t.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, I’m sure.”

“Here are Lee and the reporter,” said Scott, pointing as he spoke to their two recent companions, who were standing on the bridge awaiting their coming.

“Have you said anything about it to Lee?” asked Scott, in a low voice, as the two boys drew near the bridge across the Merced.

“Not a word.”

“Then don’t—just yet.”

“Where have you two fellows been?” inquired the reporter, as Larcum and Scott approached. “We thought you’d run away.”

“Wouldn’t run very far,” laughed Scott, as he looked up at the towering heights that shut in the valley. “The Yosemite is just an awful hole cut right into the earth, isn’t it?” said Scott, as he turned to look once more at the gray walls on every side.

“Yes,” replied the reporter, as all four stood looking up at the walls.

“ I wonder what caused it in the first place? ” said Scott.

“ For a long time it was believed that the Yosemite Valley was the result of earthquakes and volcanoes, ” suggested the reporter.

“ Don't they believe that now? ”

“ The geologists now are pretty nearly agreed that it was scooped out by immense glaciers, ” explained the reporter.

“ You do well to put in that ‘ now, ’ ” sniffed Larcum. “ To-morrow there'll be another theory, and the next day still another. I tell you it's all a matter of style, anyway! ” snapped the young giant.

“ ‘ Style, ’ Larc? What do you mean? ” asked Scott, with a laugh.

“ I'm meaning what I say, and then some more. Oh, I know that I'm not educated, as you call it. I cut loose when I found I was learning only such stuff as that about Clearchus and his pet parasangs. But I don't care. I find there's style and fashion in books, just the same as there is in clothes. ”

“ Nonsense! You know better, Larc! ”

“ Oh, I do, do I? Well, that's all right. But you just answer me this question, why don't

you use the text-book in geology that was written twenty-five years ago?"

"It's out of date and——"

"That's it! You've hit the bull's-eye the first time!" interrupted Larcum. "Now, let me ask you one more question, why don't you wear your grandfather's hat? Tell me that, will you?"

"I don't know that my grandfather had any hat," laughed Scott. "If he had, I've never seen it. May be one up in our trunk-room for all I know, but I've never disturbed it if it is there."

"Would you wear it if you did find it?"

"That would depend."

"Upon what?"

"Whether I wanted to wear it for a parade or for use."

"You wouldn't wear it for use, and you know you wouldn't. Now, why not?"

"It is out of date."

"Precisely! Exactly! Just so, and then some more! That's just what you said about geology, and now you say the same thing about your grandfather's hat—they're both out of date. That is precisely what I meant when I said there is 'fashion' in book-learning just

as much as there is in clothes. And that's about all there is to your theory as to whether this great valley was made by a volcano or by a glacier. Next week it'll be 'made' by something else or in some other way. Give me what I learn in the T. G. & P.'s offices! I can count on that."

"Still, Larc, you yourself believe in being up to date in your clothes, and even in your office work, don't you?" laughed Scott.

"You're right I do. A man under me has to keep up or quit. But, after all, there's a big difference between dressing in the garb of the present and being a dude, isn't there? Now, that's just the trouble I find with you fellows and your 'up-to-date' learning—it's the difference between dressing so as not to attract too much attention and dressing like a dude. You're a 'dude' in your book-learning, same as some other fellow may be in his suits of clothes. See the point?"

"I see that this is a wonderful place," replied Scott, as once more he turned and gazed at the massive, frowning walls. "It isn't half so wonderful to me how it came to be as it is that it is here now. Just look up there at Cloud's Rest! Why, that's over ten thousand

feet high. And the Half Dome—I can't get over that! I——”

“Of course you can't get over it!” growled Larcum. “Didn't this gentleman say it couldn't be climbed any more?” he added, as he turned to the reporter. “Come on! I'm going back to the hotel. I want to get some dry clothes on me the first thing I do.”

As soon as the party returned they first sought John's room, where they found their friend dressed and apparently no worse for his mishap of the afternoon. Each boy then went to his own room, and in a brief time all four were seated together on the piazza, waiting for the announcement that dinner was served.

“Jack,” said Larcum soberly, as he turned to his friend, “would you mind telling us what Christopher Columbus or Sunny Jim said about the impression the Yosemite made on them?”

“Indeed, I would mind it,” laughed John. “I've been in the Merced once to-day, and that's quite sufficient for my enfeebled frame.”

“What did Barnum and A. Ward, not to mention Kit Carson, Sherlock Holmes, and Sozodont, have to say of this wonderful place?”

“ Never again! ”

“ Please, Jack. ”

“ No, sir! ”

“ I'd be delighted to hear again the remarks of Garfield, Greeley, and any other G's or J's you have been so fond of quoting to us. ”

“ Not a word; not a syllable! ”

“ Honest, Jack, what can I do to show you that I'm all broken up over my own foolishness in dropping you into the river? ”

“ Nothing. It's all right now, Larc. Don't try it again, though. ”

“ ‘ Try it again? ’ Well, I rather guess Little Larkie has had an abundant sufficiency of experiments in the science of smartness! I'd do 'most anything for you, Jack. I believe I'd even be willing to listen for an hour or two to your quaint repetitions of the phraseology of the famous men who frequented this far-famed fountain of fool phrases. I really think I could stand all that. By the way, Jack, how many parasangs was it that Clearchus really marched? ”

“ Enough to get where he wanted to go. ”

“ ‘ Get to go ’ is good for a Bostonian! Jack, I never was more in earnest in all my young life. You can make me do anything you want

after this—except try any more practical jokes. No, sir; no time, never, nowhere, for nobody, does this official of the great T. G. & P. ever do that some more.”

“Here’s dinner,” broke in Scott.

The interruption instantly was heeded, and the four boys hastily made their way to the dining-room; but they had been seated at their table only a few minutes when the reporter entered and took his seat beside John. “Feeling all right again?” he inquired glibly.

“All right, thank you,” replied John.

“You didn’t explain how you fell into the water.”

“Didn’t I?”

“No. How was it?”

“If I tell you, will you promise that the story will not be used for publication?”

“Surely. I’m on my vacation, anyway.”

“Well, then, I was after the train-robbers.”

“After the train-robbers? What do you mean.” Apparently unaware that he instantly was the object of keen interest on the part of two of the boys, the reporter laughed as he asked his question, “What had the train-robbers to do with your swim in the Merced this morning?”

“ I say,” broke in Larcum hastily, “ do you know how long the trail to Glacier Point is? ”

“ It’s about five and a half miles from the hotel,” replied the reporter.

“ On foot? ”

“ No, on horseback; though there isn’t so much difference as you might imagine.”

“ Ever been up there? ”

“ A good many times. Are you going up in the morning? ”

“ That’s our plan now.”

“ I was think of going there myself.”

“ That’s all right. Come along with us, sir,” said Lee cordially.

“ Thank you. Perhaps I might, if you aren’t going to stay all night.”

“ We don’t expect to.”

“ Count on me—if I can get a horse. It’s not bad walking if one will follow his guide. You’ll have to take a guide, you know.”

“ No, I didn’t know,” said Larcum. “ Lee,” he added, “ I wish you’d arrange for that guide if we really need one. Will you? ”

“ Of course I will.”

“ Good. I’ve got some other things to attend to this evening.”

“What business can you have up here?” inquired the reporter lightly.

“My own.”

“It’s a wise man who can do that,” laughed the reporter, apparently not annoyed by the brusque reply of the young giant. “Whatever you do,” he added lightly, “you must not fail to see the display of fireworks to-night from Glacier Point. Instead of shooting up, they are shot down or thrown over the point into the valley. The effect is immense!”

An hour later Larcum joined his three friends, who, with the reporter, were watching the display of fireworks. Pulling Scott by the sleeve the young giant whispered to him, “I’ve done it.”

“Done what?” asked Scott blankly.

“Sent word to the company.”

CHAPTER XIX

THE ASCENT

THERE was no opportunity afforded for further explanations. Scott, although he was eager to learn just what word his friend had sent, was compelled to leave his questions unasked, but the huge burning brands which were cast into the valley from Glacier Point were sufficient to hold the interest of all the spectators.

“ I should think they would be afraid they might set the forests on fire,” suggested Lee. “ A forest fire here would not be any laughing matter.”

“ There’s no danger,” said the reporter lightly. “ One reason is the the stuff falls on the rocks below, and the other is that the fire burns out before it reaches the bottom. It’s like what they say about a man falling over one of the cliffs—the fall wouldn’t hurt him, because he’d starve to death before he struck the bottom of the cañon.”

“ All the same, I don’t care to try it,” said Scott dryly.

“ Don’t! You don’t have to try it, Scott,” grumbled Larcum.

“ I might fall off my horse.”

“ You won’t have any horse.”

“ Do you think I’m going to walk? If you do, you’re mistaken.”

“ I’m not mistaken, for I know you too well to believe you’d ever walk anywhere unless you had to. I’ve looked out for all that.”

“ How am I going, then? In a carriage? ”

“ If there was an ambulance, I’d have engaged that, but, as there isn’t anything of the kind to be had, I’ve done the best I could and got you a donkey.”

“ Oh, you’ll like the mountain canary, all right. He isn’t very beautiful, but he’s a sure-footed little creature. You’ll be all right,” laughed the reporter.

“ What is a mountain canary? ” inquired Scott.

“ Haven’t you ever seen one? Well, you will to-morrow morning,” laughed the reporter. “ By the way,” he added, “ have you seen the papers? ”

“ What papers? ”

“ The San Francisco morning papers.”

“ No. Anything in them? ”

“ It’s reported that the men who held up your train have been run to cover.”

“ Is that so? ” exclaimed Scott excitedly.
“ Where are they? ”

“ The train-robbers? The papers say it’s reported that one party has traced them to the hills back of Davis.”

“ Where’s that? ”

“ Not far from Sacramento.”

“ I hope they’ll be caught.”

“ They’ll be hanged if they are.”

“ That’s the law, I understand.”

“ Were there any other reports? ” inquired Larcum, who had been silent since the reporter had referred to the news of the morning.

“ Yes—three or four. One report had it that the train-robbers had made for San Francisco, another was that they had gone East, while still another was positive that the two men had separated, one going north and the other going south.”

“ What do you think of this report? ” asked Larcum quietly.

“ It may be as true as any.”

“That’s so—and not one may be the correct one.”

“Do you think they’ll ever be caught?”

“I do! Just as sure as it is that I am here is it that those two villains will never get away with their stealings.”

“What makes you so confident?” said the young reporter lightly.

“Because the railroad people will never turn back on the trail. If it leads to Japan or Alaska it will be followed.”

“But the papers say the robbers have been run to cover near Davis,” suggested Lee. “That may be true.”

“It’s true enough that the papers say so,” assented Larcum. “But you can’t tell anything about it by that.”

“Why not?”

“It may be just a false scent—something to throw those robbers off the trail. For all we know, those train-robbers may be right here in the Yosemite Valley this very minute.”

“If they are, you just point them out to us,” responded the reporter glibly. “If we can find them, we’ll all come in for a share of that reward of five thousand dollars offered by the

railroad people. That's more than the robbers got, I fancy."

"Yes. That's one reason why I am so sure both the fellows will be taken. They weren't very smart."

"They had a lot of nerve, though, Larc; you'll have to admit that," said John.

"Yes, they had more nerve than brains. Do you know, I often am inclined to think there isn't very much difference between a fool and a knave—unless it is that the knave really is a bigger fool than the one who happens to be born that way."

"That's what Socrates used to teach," said John gravely. "He claimed that men went wrong because they didn't know any better. If they knew more, they wouldn't do such fool things as a good many of them did."

"Did Socrates say that?" asked Larcum sharply.

"He did," replied John.

"Then I'll take back all I've said about studying Greek. I didn't know any of those old boys had so much sense. I got my impressions from reading how many parasangs Clearchus marched in a day's journey. How many did he, Jack?"

“Never mind now, Larc. It’s time we all went to bed, for we want to get a good start early to-morrow morning.”

“That’s good advice,” assented Larcum. “Now, if I only knew what Jupiter Pluvius and Senator Sorghum thought about the Yosemite Valley, I think I could lay me down to sleep.”

“I think you’ll have to, anyway, Larc,” said John laughingly, as the boys arose and turned into the hotel.

An hour later, when silence rested over the region and the lights of the hotel were no longer burning, Scott made his way to Larcum’s room, and, opening the door, for there were no locks or bars, silently entered.

“Who’s that?” demanded Larcum, as he sat quickly erect in bed.

“It isn’t a train-robber, Larc. Don’t be frightened,” replied Scott, in a low voice. “I’ll promise not to hurt you.”

“Humph! What’s wrong, Scott?”

“I don’t know that much of anything is. After I left you I went over to the telegraph office.”

“What of it?”

“I read your message.”

“ You did? Well, it’s all right, isn’t it? ”

“ I guess so, as far as the message is concerned.”

“ Well, what else is wrong? ”

“ I don’t know that anything is. Still, some one else has been reading your message, too.”

“ Who? ”

“ Guess.”

“ The reporter? ”

“ You’re right the first time.”

“ The operator didn’t have any right to let him or you or anybody else read that message. I’ll report him, next.”

“ The ‘ him ’ is a ‘ her.’ ”

“ Then I’ll report her.”

“ Calm down. There hasn’t any harm been done. I thought I’d just let you know what I’d found out. That report in the paper may have been just a blind, as you said.”

“ All right. Good-night, Scott,” said Larcum, as he turned upon his side.

“ I can take a hint,” laughed Scott, “ especially when it is as clear as you have just made this one. Good-night.”

Early the following morning the guide was awaiting the four boys. He himself was

mounted upon a hardy pony, and near him were standing two donkeys.

“Have you made arrangements for luncheon, Larc?” asked Scott, as the boys prepared to mount.

“I have.”

“I don’t see any signs of it anywhere.”

“That does not affect the matter any. Arrangements have been made just the same. Hold on a minute,” he added, as he turned and entered the office of the hotel; “I’ll be with you directly.”

When Larcum reappeared, Scott, who was keenly watching his friend’s face, was convinced that news of some startling kind had been received, but there was no opportunity to speak to him without being heard by his companions, so he silently watched the young giant as he prepared to mount his horse.

“Hold on a minute, Larc,” suggested Lee. “That reporter said he wanted to go with us. We told him to come along if he liked.”

“He isn’t here.”

“I know it, but I’ll run up to his room and call him.”

“He isn’t in the hotel.”

“Where is he?”

“ I don't know. He left early this morning. Went on horseback.”

“ That's all right, then,” assented Lee. “ All I wanted was to let him know that we hadn't tried to slip away for our trip without him.”

Scott was still observing Larcum and was convinced that all the young giant had learned concerning the early departure of the reporter had not been related. It was still impossible, however, to have a word with him alone, for, at the suggestion of the guide, the boys mounted their steeds and together started down the road, so that what conversation they held was, perforce, general and incidental.

Not long afterward the road was left for the trail and the ascent was begun. John and Scott, mounted upon their patient donkeys, brought up the rear of the little procession. The fact that neither was a skilled rider was too manifest to cause any remarks, and, as the little procession moved steadily forward, for a time no one spoke.

“ If I'd known the trail was as smooth and safe as this,” said John, when an hour had elapsed, “ I think I'd have chosen to walk.”

“ You'll have plenty of time for walking,” rejoined Scott. “ Before we leave the valley

we'll try some of the trails where even a donkey can't make his way."

"Just see how we're beginning to zigzag," said John, a little later. "We're cutting back and forth right across the face of the cliff. We must be fifteen hundred feet above the valley now."

"Don't look down, Jack, if you feel dizzy," called Larcum, who was riding directly behind the guide. "Want me to come back there and ride behind you?"

"No. I wouldn't take that chance now. I don't just like it, but I wouldn't have that frisky steed of yours try to get behind my donkey now. Whew!" John added, drawing a long breath, as the trail, which led along the side of the mountain, became so narrow that it did not seem possible that a horseman could be passed if one should be met.

"Hang on and look up," said Larcum encouragingly.

"I'm hanging on, all right," replied John. "If I can only keep on, I never'll find a word of fault with beast or man."

"It isn't so bad," said Lee, who was thoroughly at home on the back of a horse. "This is fine! It's such a pretty day, too——"

“ If you say that again, I know I’ll lose my hold! ” called John.

“ But you’re losing half the fun if you don’t look down. The river looks as if you could step across it. And yet there are people who say they’d rather see the Alps than this! ”

“ I never had any idea that the Sierras were so bleak. There isn’t a spear of grass to be seen anywhere,” said Scott. “ They are just great, gray granite masses.”

“ Keep still, Scott. I can stand some things, but I draw the line on descriptions just now. The sight is enough for me, I tell you! ”

“ We’ll stop here a minute and give the horses a chance to rest,” said the guide, as the party arrived on a rocky shelf whose border was so sharply defined that to step over its edge would precipitate one to the deepest depths of the valley below.

“ This is magnificent! ” exclaimed Lee, as he looked down upon the floor of the valley far below them.

“ Save your adjectives, Lee,” remarked Lar-cum. “ We aren’t more than halfway up the side yet. When we get to the top, you’ll want some of your vocabulary in reserve.”

“ Did any one ever fall over here? ” inquired John of the guide.

“ Nobody in my parties,” the guide replied.

“ Don’t you spoil his record, Jack,” laughed Scott.

“ I’ll do my best.”

“ Jack, perhaps you don’t want to go on any farther,” suggested Larcum. “ If you don’t, I’ll stay with you or go back to the hotel with you if that is what you’d rather do.”

John hesitated a moment, and then said quietly: “ No, I’m going on with you. I don’t know just what it is that makes me feel a little shaky.”

“ I do,” said Larcum.

“ What? ”

“ Your trip yesterday down the Merced. I was to blame for that, and, if you want to go back, I’ll go with you,” said Larcum.

“ I’m going on!” declared John firmly. “ There isn’t any use in being squeamish. I’ll stick to the party—likewise to the donkey. No, sir, I’m going on. Here! not that way!” he shouted, as the little beast on which he was mounted crept to the outermost border of the trail. “ Here! Stop! Stop that! I’ll get off if you don’t quit it!” shouted John, as his

donkey, leaning low on its forelegs, thrust its head over the cliff in its attempt to secure the leaves of a small bush which was growing in the crannies of the rock. There was an instant rush to the aid of the helpless John, who was striving desperately to free his feet from the stirrups.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRAIL

“SIT still, you’re all right!” shouted the guide, as John’s predicament became manifest to all the boys.

Before any one could act, however, Larcum leaped from the back of his horse and, rushing to the place where John was struggling, he seized the diminutive donkey by the tail, and, exerting all his strength, managed to draw the little animal and its rider back from the brink. The donkey, indignant at the unexpected assistance, laid back its ears and began to kick viciously. At the same time it emitted several long-drawn “hee-haws,” expressive of its feelings.

“There’s the mountain canary you were talking about!” said Lee, attempting to speak lightly, although his face was ghastly white, expressive of the terror he had suffered.

“Don’t ever try that again!” said the guide

sharply. "Whatever you do, stick to the back of the animal you're riding."

"If that donkey had gone over the edge, and had started like a flying-machine for the Sentinel Hotel down below, you wouldn't want Jack to hang on, would you?" asked Larcum, somewhat indignantly. "I know I wouldn't want him to."

"The donkey is all right," retorted the guide. "If there ever is any trouble, it's always with the rider. Now, don't never, no time, try to get off the back of an animal you're riding when you're on the trail."

"But he almost went over," said John quietly.

"No, he didn't, neither! A donkey never goes over—that is, unless some fool rider makes him. You stick to the donkey and you'll be as safe as a bug in a rug."

"Didn't you ever see or hear of a donkey falling?" asked Scott.

"Never. He's the surest-footed little beast in creation."

"I've heard of their falling and being dashed to pieces," persisted Scott.

"Well, all I can say is that you didn't hear straight, that's all," retorted the guide. "A

donkey is almost as sure on foot as a fly is."

"But the pack-mules sometimes fall," declared Scott. "I've heard of their falling, and seen pictures of them, too, in the very act."

"Pack-mules is different. Of course, if a mule is overloaded or its load isn't balanced as it ought to be, there may be trouble; but I'm not talking about pack-mules; I'm talking about donkeys on the trail to Glacier Point."

"This donkey had a load—he had Jack on his back."

"That don't make no difference! That donkey wouldn't miss his footing. I've known him for years and he's as sure as death."

"Want to go back, Jack?" inquired Larcum.

"Why should I want to go back?" demanded John.

"I didn't know but you had had enough for one day."

"Well, I haven't. I'm going on to the top," said John quietly. "When I put my hand to the plow I don't look back."

"Your grit is all right," laughed Larcum, a little uneasily; "but are you sure you feel strong enough to go on?"

“ You just watch me.”

“ All right, then, we might as well start,” said Larcum to the guide.

“ Whatever happens, you stick to the back of that little donkey,” said the guide to John. “ Don’t forget that he’s just as fond of his life as you be o’ yours. He won’t slip—you can rest easy ’bout that.”

“ I’ll be as easy as I can,” replied John lightly. “ The only thing I don’t really enjoy is having my little ‘ mountain canary ’ put his head over the edge of a precipice and try to sing to the people down in the valley two or three thousand feet below. I don’t like that, and I must say, too, that I have had experiences I have enjoyed more than I do that when the donkey kneels and tries to bite off some of the leaves on the brush growing right out of the rock just below the border of the trail. That makes me a trifle uneasy, for he might slip or something, you understand.”

“ Not a bit o’ danger,” said the guide confidently. “ You stick to the donkey and he’ll stick to you. If you feel dizzy, just look straight up; don’t ever look down.”

“ I’m all right now!” declared John. “ Go on with the procession.” The ascent was re-

sumed, and John smiled as Larcum positively declared that he was going to "form the rear guard—à la Clearchus." There were no further mishaps, however, when the party arrived at Union Point, which the guide explained was two-thirds of the distance from the valley to Glacier Point.

"How high are we now?" inquired Scott.

"Sixty-three hundred and fourteen feet. Get a fine view here, though naturally it isn't as good as what we'll see when we get clear up."

"When will that be?" asked Lee.

"Pretty quick."

Wonderful as the view of the great valley below them was, the boys did not long delay at Union Point. Steadily making their way upward, stopping for an occasional rest for the horses; still following the trail, which zigzagged along the steep face of the cliff, they continued on their way until at last they found themselves on Glacier Point. Leaving their horses and mules in charge of the guide, all four boys ran toward the long iron rail that had been fixed between two of the huge rocks, and, standing near the flagstaff that had been erected there, in silence they gazed down at the won-

derful valley below them. Its tremendous sides seemed to be even more precipitous than before. Waterfalls, cliffs, overhanging mountains, forests, great bare rocks seemed almost to combine to deepen the impression the marvelous spectacle produced. The mountaintops were apparently almost on a level with the place where the boys were standing. The Yosemite Valley itself was straight down below them, its narrow green floor being apparently divided into two parts by the shining waters of the Merced.

“We’re on the rock that reaches straight out over the valley,” said Scott, at last, the first to break in upon the eloquent silence.

“Isn’t there anything under us?” asked John hastily.

“Not a thing. We’re standing on a shelf of rock that hangs out over the valley. If it should happen to break off, we’d never have to go back on the horses and donkeys.”

“How high are we?”

“Pretty nearly a mile and a half—between seven and eight thousand feet.”

“I’m glad I came,” murmured John. “The Yosemite Valley is just a great bowl scooped out of the Sierras, isn’t it?”

“That, and a little more,” said Scott.

“Which is more impressive, Lee, the valley or these great bleak, barren, steep sides of the mountains that shut it in?” asked Jack.

“Both. You couldn’t have one without the other, could you? It’s like the question my grandfather used to ask me when my grandmother would give me a cookie—one of those round kind that has a hole in the middle, all surrounded by the cookie, you know. He used to ask me if I ate the hole, and, when I’d tell him I hadn’t, he’d want to know what had become of it?”

“Did you tell him?” asked Scott.

“No, I never found out. But I thought of it when Jack here asked me his question.”

“Jack is feeling better,” laughed Lee. “He begins to show again where he was born.”

“I’m feeling better than I shall on my way back, I’m afraid,” said John. “It’s worse going down than it is coming up, isn’t it?” he inquired of the guide, who now had joined the party.

“You’re right it is,” replied the guide.

“You told me to look up. How am I going to do that on my way down the mountain?”

“ You can’t. You’ll just have to shut your eyes and hang on. The donkey will do the rest.”

“ If you’d rather walk, Jack, I’ll walk with you,” suggested Larcum.

“ I’m not going to walk; I’m going to ride! ” declared John. “ I told you that before,” he added, a little testily.

“ So you did,” laughed Larcum. “ I forgot that some of the grit of Plymouth Rock is in your make-up. You are all right, Jack.”

“ It’s time for luncheon, isn’t it? ” asked Scott.

“ Any time is that with you, Scott,” said Larcum. “ Still, I’ll be generous and join you in a frugal repast.”

The boys turned back and at once went to the little Glacier Point Hotel where, as they were compelled to wait for a time before they could be served, they seated themselves on the piazza to await the announcement for which all four were eager.

“ Larc,” said Scott, who was seated beside his friend, a little apart from the others, “ what do you make of the disappearance of the reporter? ”

“ It seems to me,” said Larcum soberly, “ that it means he has gone.”

“ Yes, but why did he go? ”

“ Because he didn’t desire to linger longer.”

“ Do you think he suspects us of suspecting him? ”

“ I surely do. We’ve made a mistake in letting him get any such impression. It’s just another lesson that no one ought to talk before he has something to say. Now, if the railroad people send a man up here, I’ll be in a fine predicament, won’t I? I’m half-inclined to make trouble for the operator here. She had no right to let him see my lettergram.”

“ Of course she hadn’t, but she did. What made you put your lettergram so strong? You said right out that the two men might be the train-robbers.”

“ Well, what would you say? That was what I wanted to tell.”

“ Not at that time.”

“ Yes, I did at that time,” grumbled Larcum. “ I don’t know that it will do any harm, after all. If the reporter is the man that’s wanted, he can’t get away even if he does leave the Yosemite.”

“ It does look suspicious, doesn’t it? ” said

Scott thoughtfully. "The fellow leaves without a word just as soon as he finds out that you have sent a lettergram to San Francisco."

"Oh, there are a whole lot of things that squint that way. Have you said anything about the matter to any one?"

"Not a word. Have you?"

"Have I? What do you think I am, anyway?"

"You're all right, Larc, if you do take yourself a little too seriously. Come on, there's the first call for luncheon."

Joining their friends, the boys at once made their way to the dining-room, where, for a time, conversation ceased while they were busy with the luncheon that was served. At their table two other boys, of nearly the same age as the young travelers, were seated, and, in a brief time, the strangers explained that they were students in one of the larger colleges of California. The interest of each party in the other was speedily keen and the questions each asked showed clearly that the knowledge the Western boys possessed of the older institutions in the East was much greater than that which the Eastern boys had of the colleges on the Pacific coast.

“That’s the way of it,” laughed one of the Western boys. “You people back East don’t know that there is anything worth while west of the Mississippi.”

“Is there anything?” asked Scott demurely.

“What are you fellows doing out here on your vacation if there isn’t? Do you suppose the crowds that think they have to go abroad to see the Alps, if they want mountains, find anything better than there is right in their own country? Is there anything anywhere to be compared with the Yosemite? What kind of an American, anyway, is the man who thinks he must go to Europe before he finds out what, as a citizen of the United States, he has in his own land?”

“What’s the use?” said John. “You might as well compare a valley with a mountain and say which is better. Have you ever been East?”

“Yes—as far as Denver.”

“That’s good,” laughed John. “Didn’t you like it?”

“Denver is one of the finest cities I ever saw.”

“You ought to see Boston,” broke in Lar-cum. “Ever hear of the town?”

“ Yes, a few times.”

“ Well, if the native Bostonian wasn't so modest, you'd hear more of it. It's hard work to make a Boston fellow really feel that what he has is so much better than anything else in the whole world. Isn't it, Jack? ” Larcum added, turning to John as he spoke.

“ Not if he compares it with woolly, beefy, porcine, raw, windy Chicago,” retorted John, a little warmly.

“ Good! ” exclaimed Larcum. “ Fine! You see what I mean, don't you? ” he laughingly demanded of the Western college boy.

“ I think I do. Are you going to the Sentinel to-night? ”

“ Yes. We came up this morning.”

“ That's fine! We're going there ourselves. To-morrow we're going to take a tramp up to Vernal Falls.”

“ Where did you get him? ”

“ Get what? ”

“ Your 'tramp.' You said you were going to take one to Vernal Falls.”

“ Yes; I see,” said the college boy slowly. “ I thought, perhaps, you might want to come with us.”

CHAPTER XXI

THE CLIMB

THE descent was even more difficult for John than was the climb of the morning. To look up was impossible, and the view below him was so steep that at times it seemed to the young rider almost impossible for his donkey to make it. Not a word did John speak, however, and only his colorless face betrayed the fear that gripped him. He was not aware how closely and carefully Larcum was following him, nor how anxious the young giant was that his friend should not meet with any mishap.

When at last the little party arrived at the Sentinel no one was more relieved than was Larcum, though he endeavored to conceal his feeling from John, who, he was aware, would resent anything resembling sympathy from his companions.

“The donkey was the least concerned member of the band,” said John lightly, as he and Larcum sought their rooms.

“The little beasts never stumble,” responded Larcum. “That’s what makes them so valuable for mountain climbing.”

“What do we do to-morrow?”

“The guide suggested that we should go to Vernal and Nevada Falls.”

“How do we go?”

“You can drive almost all the way if you want.”

“Suppose I don’t ‘want’?”

“Then you may go as you please,” laughed Larcum, relieved at his discovery that his friend apparently was not suffering from any bad effects of his involuntary plunge into the cold, rushing waters of the Merced.

“How are you going?”

“We’d thought of walking.”

“That suits me.”

“We’ll talk it over after dinner,” said Larcum, “and see what Lee and Scott have to say.”

After dinner the group assembled on the piazza of the hotel, where they were joined by one of the college boys whom they had met on Glacier Point. In the course of the conversation their new friend explained that his name was Dana Watkins, and that for several years

past he had spent each summer vacation in the Yosemite.

“How long a walk is it to Vernal and Nevada Falls?” inquired Lee.

“About five and a half miles,” said Dana.

“That’s eleven miles, then, for the round trip,” suggested Larcum. “That’s a pretty long tramp for Lee.”

“Lee can do it, if the rest of you want to,” spoke up Lee promptly.

“But you’ll have to work—and you know that never agreed with you.”

“I’m ready—if you are. How about you, Jack?” asked Lee.

“I’m for walking,” responded John promptly. “No more donkeys for me, unless I’m compelled to ride. I felt almost as if I was standing on my head when we were coming down from Glacier Point. My little beast wanted to stop and pick some more of the plants over the edge of the trail. I wonder what would happen if he should get too far over?”

“I don’t know much about Clearchus, but I know that,” snapped Larcum.

“What?”

“He’d fall.”

“Why?”

“ Law of gravitation.”

“ You’re all right, Larc,” laughed John. “ Maybe you can explain why a needle won’t stand on its point.”

“ Geometry says there isn’t any such thing as a ‘ point.’ It exists only in your imagination. Well, if there isn’t any such thing as a point, a needle can’t have any, can it? Then, if it hasn’t any, it can’t stand on something it hasn’t got. See? ”

“ Call it the tip, then, not the point,” laughed John.

“ The center of gravitation falls outside the base.”

“ Correct! Magnificent!” exclaimed John, as all the boys laughed.

“ Oh, you are too much for me,” sighed Larcum. “ You asked me just now why a needle wouldn’t stand on its point, didn’t you? ”

“ I did.”

“ Well, let me tell you something—it will, if you stick it in.”

“ You’re impossible, Larc! ”

“ Why am I impossible? Didn’t you tell me just now that I was ‘ correct,’ ‘ magnificent,’ *et cetera?* ”

“ Mostly ‘ *et cetera,*’ I’m afraid.”

“What time would you like to start to-morrow?” inquired Dana.

“Early,” said Scott promptly.

“We can order breakfast at six.”

“That’s a good time. We’ll be started by nine if we can get Larc out of bed,” said Scott.

“I’ll be the first one in the dining-room to-morrow morning!” said Larcum promptly.

“That remains to be seen,” said Scott, winking at Lee.

“I’ll be on hand, and, if it’s necessary, I’ll see that all the rest of you are, too. Do we need a guide?” Larcum added, as he turned to Dana.

“I know the way,” replied Dana. “If you’re willing to trust me, I’ll do my best, and you can save your money.”

“We’ll go without a guide,” said John quickly.

“That’s Bostonian thrift for you,” laughed Lee.

“It’s common sense,” retorted John. “What do we want a guide along with us for when we’re better off and happier without one?”

“That remains to be seen,” said Dana quietly. “There are two fellows here who say

they're going to follow the trail to the top of Cloud's Rest to-morrow morning, and they're going without a guide, too."

"Isn't it safe?"

"'Safe!' Why, man, those fellows are crazy! I like to see a man have nerve, but I've no use for a fool. They'll lose the trail; they're likely to slip or fall, and, if they do, nobody on earth can help them. The guides don't go there much, and, even when they do, some of them keep a good supply of rope and pegs on hand. These fellows are simply foolhardy to talk of any such thing."

"Who are the fellows?" asked Larcum.

"Two young chaps from San Francisco. One of them is a reporter on one of the daily papers there——"

"But he left early this morning," interrupted Larcum sharply.

"Did he? Well, he's back now, and he has a friend with him. I saw them right after dinner, and the reporter told me he was going to start for Cloud's Rest early to-morrow morning. He said he and his friend would take three days if necessary."

"Do you know this reporter?" asked Larcum quietly.

“ I’ve seen him here.”

“ When? ”

“ Oh, several times. He was here last summer, too.”

“ What is his name? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ I do, and I’ll tell you,” spoke up some one who at that moment approached the little party. As the boys looked up, they saw that the reporter himself was speaking to them.

“ When did you come back? Where have you been? We missed you to-day,” said Scott quickly. “ You were going with us up to Glacier Point, you know.”

“ Yes, I know,” replied the reporter lightly, “ but I had to go over to El Portal early this morning. That’s the trouble with a newspaper man, he never can depend upon his time. He’s almost as bad as a physician; he’s liable to be called out at any time, day or night.”

“ A good deal worse than some doctors that I know,” remarked Larcum dryly.

“ That’s right; a good deal worse, for sometimes he has to deal with fool ‘ stories,’ ” remarked the reporter.

“Are you really going to try to make Cloud’s Rest?” asked Lee.

“You heard what young Watkins just told you.”

“He says it’s dangerous.”

“That’s very likely.”

“Why do you try it, then?”

“Oh, that’s one of the things you never can understand. I fancy those train-robbers that held up your train knew there was some danger in doing what they did; but that didn’t stop them, did it?”

“It didn’t seem to,” acknowledged John. “Do you hear anything more of them?”

“No more than you have heard. You have seen the papers.”

“Probably they’re hid away in some cañon, waiting for the trouble to blow over,” said Larcum quietly.

“That’s what the paper says.”

“Is that what you believe?”

“I don’t know what to believe. No two ever act alike. Sometimes they’ll go straight to the big cities, and then again they’ll hide away among the hills.”

“Do they ever come into the Yosemite to hide?” asked Lee.

“ I don't know that I ever heard of any doing that. It wouldn't be a bad place for that kind of work, would it? ”

“ Come on, fellows. If we start as early tomorrow morning as we've agreed to, we'll have to turn in now, so that Jack will get his sleep——”

“ You can speak for yourself, Larc,” interrupted John. “ I'm not one that has to be wrapped up in cotton batting and put away to keep.”

All five boys, however, had risen, and, as soon as they started up the stairs, Larcum touched Scott on the arm, indicating his desire for his friend to delay a moment.

“ What do you make of it, Larc? ” asked Scott, when the two boys were left to themselves. “ Is he really going to do what he says? ”

“ I don't know. What do you think? ”

“ I think he'll start, all right. Strange about his friend being here.”

“ Not so very strange. He's been here before. I don't know where he is now. Come on, Scott. We'll see if the operator hasn't had some word for me.”

A visit to the telegraph office, however, failed

to reveal any word in reply to the message that Larcum had sent. Still puzzled, the boys at last sought their rooms, leaving their perplexing problem unsolved.

Early in the morning, when the boys started on their journey, the reporter joined them, and in response to their inquiries, explained that his friend had already preceded him and would be waiting for him where the trail diverged from the one that the young travelers were to follow.

“Why do you take such a dangerous trip alone?” inquired Lee of the reporter, as the party trudged forward.

“Oh, it isn’t so dangerous; it’s just hard. We may find some deep snow before we get to the top; but that’s the worst.”

“You’ll find slippery rocks and a blind trail,” said young Watkins. “I like a hard trail myself; but, without a guide, I’m afraid you’ll have troubles of your own.”

“Here’s where we leave you,” said Dana, as the party came to a dividing of the ways. “Where is your friend?”

“Not very far away, I guess,” said the reporter, as he placed a finger in his mouth and whistled twice in a peculiar way. An answer-

ing whistle came from up the trail, and then the reporter laughingly said, "He's not far away, you see."

"Why doesn't he show himself?" asked Scott. "He hasn't done anything to make him want to hide, has he?"

"Not yet," laughed the reporter. "Good-by," he said; "I'll see you three days from now at the Sentinel." Stopping a moment to draw a little more tightly the strap which held the bundle he was carrying on his shoulder, he soon disappeared from the sight of the boys.

Steadily the five boys followed the trail as it led up the ascending walls of green. Occasional glimpses of Liberty Cap, the bleak and towering mountain in the distance, the shrubbery that almost seemed to choke the cañon, the vision of fleecy clouds overhead, the presence of treetops that rose from below to the level of the trail, all added to the interest of the climb. Still no one asked to stop until the party arrived at the bridge that crossed the roaring, tumbling Merced below them. Then, moved by a common desire, the boys halted, and a part of the luncheon they had brought with them speedily disappeared.

When their journey was resumed, the heat of the sun became more intense, the ground was muddy, and the rocks and leaves were covered with the spray that was falling all about them. The view of the fall from the bridge, glorious as it was, did not satisfy the boys, and with one accord, they continued their climb until at last, by the aid of the iron chain which had been stretched alongside the narrow path, they obtained the sight for which they had gladly come so far.

Between seventy and eighty feet in width, the stream plunged over the brink to the rocks, three hundred and fifty feet below. Standing on the flat rock close to the water, the boys in silence watched the tremendous volume of water as it dashed upon the stones. For a time no one spoke, and then John said, "This is the finest of all!"

"As three hundred and fifty is to twenty-five hundred, so is Vernal Falls to the Yosemite Falls," said Scott.

"That's all true," admitted John, "but here there is no such awful setting of bleak and dreary precipices. The fall is the great thing——"

John stopped abruptly as the boys all turned

to look at a man who was approaching from below. When he had gained the place where the boys were standing, he said quietly, " I am looking for a young man named Larcum Brown. Is he here? "

CHAPTER XXII

A MESSENGER

“THAT is my name,” said Larcum promptly.

“Please come back here a little way with me,” suggested the stranger. “I wish to have a few words with you.”

Larcum at once complied with the request, and, as he followed the man, he was aware that his friends were watching him with keen interest. Disregarding their curiosity, the young giant withdrew with the stranger, and a half-hour had elapsed before he rejoined his friends, who were waiting for him on the bridge.

“What’s wrong, Larc?” demanded Lee eagerly, when Larcum returned.

“Nothing unusual,” replied Larcum.

“What did that man want?”

“He wanted to see me.”

“Who is he?”

“A railroad man from San Francisco.”

“Wanted to consult you about the best

method of running a railroad, didn't he?" laughed John, who was shrewdly observing his friend.

"If he did, he didn't ask me about Clearchus and his parasangs, anyway," retorted Larcum. "He wasn't interested in ancient history; he's up to date, and that is some comfort."

"What did he come up here for? You haven't told us," said Lee.

"Yes, I did; he came to see me."

"What for?"

"To consult with me."

"What for?"

"About something important. I'd tell you all about it, fellows, only this man didn't want me to—just yet."

"Must have been something mighty big to make him follow us clear up here to these falls."

"How do you know he 'followed' us?" demanded Larcum sharply. "We aren't the only people in the world that have followed the trail to Nevada Falls."

"Well, all I can say is that, if he came up here to see the falls, he was easily satisfied. He didn't tarry long."

“ What are we to do next? ”

“ Go on with our plan.”

“ Doesn't this important personage want you to go back with him? ”

“ No. I gave him all the information I thought it was wise for him to have. If he needs more later, why, that's another story, as Kipling says. Come on, fellows! We'll go on to Nevada Falls.”

Following the trail, the boys once more crossed the river, stopping, however, for a brief rest upon the rude little bridge that spanned it. Here they could see the Diamond Cascade above them, while below was the misty veil which was known as the Silver Apron. Soon afterward the first view of the Nevada Falls was obtained. The sloping descent was about six hundred feet.

“ How far is it to the top? ” asked Scott.

“ Does any one know? ”

“ It's about three-quarters of a mile from here,” answered Dana.

“ Good trail? ”

“ Yes, though it's pretty steep and zigzags a good deal.”

“ We'll try it,” said John promptly.

In response the boys all started up the steep

way, and, when at last they gained the top, every one, except Larcum, was nearly breathless from the climb. The view, however, repaid every one, and, in the impressive scene, all were silent as they watched the roaring flood. Larcum tossed broken branches into the swift current, and, timing the distance they covered in three seconds, tried to obtain an estimate of the rapidity with which the foaming waters slipped down the steep fall.

Here, amidst the green trees, moist from the spray of the fall, and dark with shade, the boys prepared the luncheon they had brought with them. Wearied by the climb, every one was ready when Scott shouted, "First call for luncheon," and for a time all were silent while the viands rapidly disappeared.

"This pays for it all," murmured John, as he gazed at the fall and then turned to look at the steep, barren sides of the Sierras, which shut in the wonderful valley. "This is certainly the grandest sight I ever saw."

"We can't have any better time than we had in the Yellowstone,"¹ suggested Lee. "I think that was the greatest of all."

¹See "Four Boys in the Yellowstone."

“ You ought to think England ¹ gave you the best time,” said Scott; “ that’s where you got your fortune, you know.”

“ England is all right,” growled Larcum—“ or, it would be, if they would only speak the English language.”

“ How’s that, Larc? ” inquired John.

“ That’s how it is, and that’s all I know. I was near a station one day in London, where I wanted to take a train—maybe it was the day I started for Rugby, I’m not sure—and I asked a man where I would find what I was looking for. Now, what do you think the fellow told me to do? ”

“ They were all mighty courteous, I thought,” said Lee.

“ I’m not talking about courtesy. I’m talking about the use of the mother tongue. The man told me to ‘ go down to the bottom and then go up to the top and I’d find my train.’ I hadn’t any more idea what he meant than I would have had if he’d told me I’d find it somewhere in the underside of the Andes.”

“ What did you do, Larc? ” laughed John. “ I shouldn’t have had the remotest concep-

¹See “ Four Boys and a Fortune.”

tion of what he meant for me to do. What did he mean? ”

“ He meant for me to go down to the end of the block and then up to the end of the street on the other side of the station, and I’d find my train made up there.”

“ Why didn’t he say so, then? ” said Scott.

“ He did—in his way,” said John. “ It all depends on the use and the meaning of words. Now, I heard an Englishman say, not long ago, that some American told him that stock joke of ours about peaches—that we ‘ eat all we can, and can what we can’t.’ ”

“ He didn’t see anything funny in it, did he? ” said Scott.

“ No. How could he? In England they don’t speak of ‘ canning ’ fruits—they ‘ tin ’ them. Of course——”

“ What a way—to call canning tinning,” said Scott scornfully.

“ It’s just custom, that’s all. Their customs are strange to us, and ours are strange to them.”

“ Never mind our trip to England; that’s ancient history, you know, and I’m not fond of that. What I want you to see is this present wonderful sight. The valley is just like a great

hole cut right in the solid rock of the Sierras. Are you all taking in that fact? ”

“ We are, ” responded Scott.

“ Are you aware that the valley looks as if the only way to get in was to fall in, and, if once a man got in, there was no way for him to get out? ”

“ Yea, verily; we are. ”

“ Then, if that is duly impressed on your youthful and impressionable, not to say plastic, mental apparatus, I move that we start for the Sentinel Hotel. Are you ready? ”

Rested from the climb of the morning and refreshed by the luncheon which they had brought, the boys declared themselves to be ready for the return, and at once started on the downward trail.

Purposely, as Larcum believed, Scott fell back beside his huge friend, and when the two were sufficiently far in the rear of their companions to prevent their words from being overheard, he said, “ Larc, did that man come up here because of your telegram? ”

“ I suspect that he did. ”

“ Did he have anything to say? ”

“ He did. He cast sundry and divers aspersions on my lettergram to him. He even

accused me of inciting him to wild-goose chases, and implied that I was a dealer in white elephants, held stock in yellow journals, and couldn't see a knothole in the side of a barn door."

"Be serious a minute, Larc. I was to——"

"I never was more serious in all my born days," interrupted Larcum. "I was even contemplating dropping the ribald, railroad ranter into the roaring, rushing, riotous Nevada Fall, *à la* the mode by which I cured Boston Jack of his quaint and curious citations from the critical comments of the great——"

"Hold on, Larc," broke in Scott, "have you any plan?"

"I have," replied Larcum promptly.

"What is it?"

"A certain secret and shrewd hunt for the villains."

"That's all right, but what is to be done?"

"To-morrow I depart with the railroad magnate."

"Where?"

"For the trail up Cloud's Rest."

"Only you two going?"

"That's it. I'll have to depend upon you, Scott, to help keep the other fellows quiet. Just

now we don't want them to know anything about our plan. Honestly, Scott, the detective—for this man is a detective the railroad people have sent up here, for they're following every possible clue they can get—doesn't believe there is anything in this matter at all. Still, he wants to be sure; so he's come up here, and when I told him that our friend, the reporter, had started for a three days' trip up Cloud's Rest, why, he wanted me to follow. We leave the Sentinel at six o'clock to-morrow morning, taking a guide and horses with us as far as they'll be of any help."

"Then you'll be two against two if you should find the men."

"Precisely."

"They're desperate fellows, Larc. Don't you think I'd better go along?"

"For what?"

"To help you in case you need help."

Repressing the word that rose to his lips, Larcum said soberly: "No, Scott; you'll help most by keeping the boys quiet. Don't let them even suspect there is anything going on."

"How'll I do it?"

"I don't know. Suppose you say to-night you want to try a carriage to-morrow. You've

tramped and ridden horseback, and now you want to try driving. I believe every fellow will be so sore and tired to-night that he'll fall in with your suggestion, and won't suspect me if I say I'm going to try something different."

"I'll do my best," agreed Scott, as he and Larcum hastened to overtake their friends, who now were far in advance of them.

In the evening, after a bath and a dinner, to which every one of the young travelers did ample justice, Scott's suggestion for a drive on the following day was eagerly hailed by John and Lee, neither of whom was willing to admit that the tramp to Nevada and Vernal Falls had been too strenuous for them. As Larcum did not express any preference, his own project was not touched upon.

A half-hour after the boys had taken their accustomed seats on the piazza, they were joined by a venerable old gentleman, who, as he took the chair which Lee at once secured for him, explained that his home was in the Yosemite Valley and that he had dwelt there many years.

"You might not believe it, young gentlemen," their guest continued, "but I came out here for my health."

“ You look as if it agreed with you here, sir,” suggested Lee.

“ Yes, you might be led to believe that. I am now eighty-four years of age. If nothing unforeseen occurs, there is a good prospect that I may live to be an old man.”

“ Where did you come from? ”

“ I was born and lived in New Hampshire until I came out here. I was a ‘lunger’——”

“ A what? ” inquired John.

“ A ‘lunger,’ ” said the old gentleman, laughing as he spoke. “ That’s the term applied to any one who comes West because of some affection of his lungs. I was just skin and bones when I came, and now I weigh two hundred and thirty-seven pounds. If this little boy would stay here,” he added quietly, as he placed a hand on Larcum’s knee, “ he might get to be considerable of a man—in time.”

“ Better stay, Larc,” laughed Scott, as he turned to his friend.

“ You must have had some great experiences here,” said John.

“ I have.”

“ Ever seen any grizzlies? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Mountain lions? ”

“ Plenty of them. They are quite plentiful still.”

“ Do you mean that we might run across a mountain lion in the valley now? ” said Scott hastily.

“ Yes, sir. You may find one on your way to Wawona, if you are going over to see the Big Trees.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE YOSEMITE CHIEFTAIN

“ How was the Yosemite found? Who discovered it? ” asked John.

“ It came naturally after the discovery of gold in California. Such a place as this could not long be hidden.”

“ When was the gold discovered? ”

“ January nineteenth, eighteen hundred and forty-eight.”

“ Who discovered it? ”

“ James W. Marshall.”

“ My! He must have become a rich man! ” suggested Lee.

“ No. On the contrary, he died poor.”

“ Where did he find the gold? ”

“ At Sutter’s sawmill—over at Caloma. It was before the days of the telegraph, but it seemed almost as if by magic the world heard of the find. Trains of prairie-schooners began to cross the plains, and, as for the bay at San Francisco, why, I myself have seen the waters

almost covered by the ships that were bringing in men who were well-nigh crazy with the gold fever. The bite of the 'gold bug' is really more serious than the bite of a rattlesnake.

"Well, as the men spread out in their search for the gold, the prospectors and others naturally came more and more in contact with the Indians of the country. Sometimes the relations would be pleasant, and then again there would be trouble."

"Honestly, who was to blame for the troubles—the white man or the Indian?" asked John.

"It was not entirely confined to one side, but I have no question that most of it was due to the whites. In the official reports away back in 1850 I read: 'It is a well-known fact that, among our white population, there are men who boast of the number of the Indians they have killed and that not one of them shall escape.'"

"You can't blame the Indians," said John warmly. "They were here first; they had their homes here, and naturally they didn't want to give them up to the white men—especially when they were of the kind that naturally follows the miners."

“ True enough, but perhaps not all of the truth. At any rate, the Indians began to combine and prepare to resist——”

“ How did they do that? ”

“ They had a system of telegraphing by means of fires and smoke, but they mostly relied upon their runners or messengers, who went from one Indian village to another. The Yosemitees made the first open attack; or, rather, they led in the attack which was made upon a trading-post about twenty-five miles below the valley on the Merced River. The miners drove the redskins away, but that only seemed to increase the bitterness, and the first attack proved to be only one among a good many. There was so much suspicion now on each side that the troubles began to increase, and they soon came thick and fast and there were a good many savage and brutal things done. If the Indians gained an advantage and took the blankets, flour, and everything of value from some trading-post, as sometimes they did, that only served to make the whites more angry and the redmen more eager. Of course there could be only one end to troubles of that kind, and that was that the whites should win. They did, too. Soldiers were sent here, the local

bodies of men organized, and before long it was just a question which party should drive the other out of this country. As I said, there could be only one answer.

“Matters finally reached such a state that a special plan of extermination was planned and carefully set in motion. Some of the Christian Indians, descendants of those that had been won by the early Spanish missionaries away back before 1770—you know, the leader of these missionaries was Junipero Serra, the one who discovered and named the bay of San Francisco,—these Christian Indians, as I was saying, were doing all in their power to stop the fighting, but they could not accomplish very much. The tribes were convinced now that they must exterminate the white men or be themselves exterminated, and the palefaces were just as certain that there would never be safety, much less peace, until the Indians had been driven away from this country. In a time like that men don't stop to think of right; they think a good deal more of what they are pleased to call their rights. So the war went on. Still the Christian Indians were sent as messengers of peace to all the Indian villages, but the redmen did not be-

lieve their enemies would stop short of destroying every tribe, so the peaceful messengers did not accomplish much.

“Next, the white men sent some different messengers to the Indian villages. This time the runners told of the power of the whites—what they had done and could and would do if the tribes held out, and also what the palefaces would promise in the way of gifts and protection if the fighting was stopped.”

“Have you any idea how many Indians were in California at that time?” inquired John.

“Major Savage estimated that there were all of ninety thousand. Well, one of these runners reported to Major Savage—he was in command of the new troops—that the Indians in a deep, rocky valley on the Merced did not want peace, and that they never would send any of their warriors for a peace conference. These were the Yosemite tribe, and the runners told how confident they were that their enemies never would be able to get into the valley, and that the tribe never could be driven out of the region. If any white men should try to enter the valley, all that the Yosemitees would have to do to protect themselves would

be to stand on some of the cliffs and roll or drop great rocks on the heads of their enemies.”

“ Good plan,” said Scott. “ If some one should drop a stone from the top of El Capitan, it would create considerable commotion on the party below.”

“ That was what they believed. Well, the major was so eager himself to avoid a fight, and had received so many good words from some of the various tribes, that he didn’t want to give up the Yosemite, who were still holding out against any form of peace. So he sent a special messenger to the old chief of the Yosemite—as fine a character as ever was found in Greece or Rome, though he didn’t happen to find a classical author to write up his ability, eloquence, or patriotism. His name was Tenieya—at least that’s the way it has come down to me. I understand that some of the more up-to-date people call his name Tenaya. At all events, the lake, the cañon, and the peak,—you can get to them up the Eagle Peak trail,—only about eighteen miles from here, are all named for the old hero, for that’s what he was, no matter what anybody says to the contrary.”

“ Parkman says that the oratory of the Mo-

hawk chiefs was as fine as that of Cicero or Demosthenes," suggested John.

"I have no doubt of it. Well, Tenieya, or Tenaya, whichever you want to call him,—I have noticed that some people think they must change the old ways or they cannot be up to date; for example, people now say Yosemite, whereas the original word was Yo Semites,—finally agreed to come to the peace conference, for at heart he was as eager as any one to put an end to the fighting. The officers, and men, too, for the matter of that, received the old chief in a manner befitting his dignity, but Tenieya was still suspicious that they were setting a trap of some kind for him.

"After some parleying, the major told the old sachem that, if he would go and make a treaty of peace with the commissioners, just as the other tribes were doing, there would not be any more war.

"Tenieya then said: 'Let us remain in the mountains where we were born; where the ashes of our fathers have been given to the winds. We do not want anything from the white men.'

"'If you and your people have all you desire,' said the major, 'why do you steal our

horses and mules? Why do you rob the miners' camps?'

“ Old Tenieya was silent a moment, and then replied: ‘ My young men have sometimes taken horses and mules from the whites. It was wrong for them to do so. It is not wrong to take the property of enemies who have wronged my people. My young men believed the gold-diggers to be their enemies. If they are not, we shall be glad to live at peace with them. We will stay here and be friends.’

“ ‘ Your people must go to the commissioners and make peace with them,’ said the major firmly.

“ Old Tenieya then said: ‘ It is useless to talk to you about the stealing of your horses or the burning of your property. If the Chow-chillas do not boast of it, they are cowards, for they led us on. I am old, and you can kill me if you will, but of what use will that be to you who know more than all the Indians, and can beat them in their big hunts of deer and bear? Therefore, I will not lie to you, but promise that, if I am permitted to return to my people, I will bring them in.’ The major told him to go. The next day Tenieya came back and reported that his people were willing to come

and make a treaty if they could come with safety. Another day passed and still the Indians did not come from the deep valley. The old chief explained that the snows were too deep to permit travel by the women and children. The white men growled, and kept close watch of the sachem, but still allowed him to come and go freely.

“ At last, when several days had passed and there were no signs of the coming of the Yosemitees, it was decided to send an expedition into the deep, dark valley. The major made a footrace the test of the selection of the men to go—the slowest to stay behind and guard the camp. When at last the selected men started for the valley they soon found that Tenieya had told them the truth about the snow. It was so deep that in places the only way the men could get through was by having some one on horseback go ahead and break or make a way and then another follow him and then another, until in this way a fairly passable path had been made.

“ About halfway the soldiers met a party of seventy-two Yosemitees floundering through the snow and loaded down with their children and property——”

“ On their way to the commissioners? ” asked Scott.

“ Yes.”

“ Well, that showed that old Tenieya was honest, anyway.”

“ Yes, but pretty soon some one asked him where were all the other members of the tribe. Only about seventy-two were there, you see. He explained that some were sick, others had gone to the tribes from which they had secured their wives, but that all would come later. This explanation did not satisfy the soldiers, and, after they had selected a young brave as guide in place of the old chief, they resumed their journey to the valley. Those of the Mariposa Battalion, as it was called, were the first white men to enter the Yosemite Valley.”

“ When was it? ” inquired John.

“ May fifth or sixth, 1851. The day after the battalion came into the home of the ‘ grizzlies ’—for the word Yosemite means a full-grown grizzly bear—the soldiers began their investigation. Up near El Capitan they discovered a smoldering fire, and this they concluded at once was a signal of some kind. They found a village or camp of rude huts there, and the immense quantity of acorns they saw stored

in the place made the soldiers believe that some besides sick Indians were not far away.

“As not many Indians were seen, however, the soldiers returned to camp, and not long afterward a second and larger expedition was sent into the valley. The plan now was to surprise the Yosemitees, capture as many of the women and children as possible, and so bring the warriors to terms. The surprise was pretty effectually carried out, but, though the men found new huts and many signs that the Indians were near, for a time they were not able to discover any of the warriors. At last the men saw living forms moving about among the high cliffs and rocks, and a detail managed to capture several. Among the prisoners were two or three sons of the old sachem. You passed the place where they were taken on your way in.

“At the suggestion of one of Tenieya’s sons he and his brother-in-law were sent to bring the old chief into the camp of the soldiers, the other sons to be retained as hostages. By the way, the place where these three sons of Tenieya were captured was near those three peaks that are so much alike down the valley.”

“The Three Brothers?” asked Lee.

“That’s the spot. They were named for these three sons of the old Yosemite chieftain. Well, after the messengers left the camp, the youngest son of Tenieya tried to escape, but was shot and killed. Meanwhile, the soldiers were searching for more of the Indians, and, before they knew it, they were lured into a trap. They followed some running Indians until they came into a gully, or cañon, and the first thing they knew there was a shower of rocks raining upon them. Some of the white men were killed before the party made its escape. Of course this added fuel to the flame, and, by the time the old chief came with the messengers, they were all almost ready to exterminate the tribe. No, I haven’t given you all. One report has it that the chief was taken prisoner and brought to camp and did not return with the messengers that had been sent for him. When he came, the first sight that greeted his eyes was the dead body of his own boy. He steadily refused to tell where his people were hidden, and then suddenly he rushed from his keeper and ran for the bank of the river. Before he could plunge in he was taken again, and when he was brought back he faced the leader, and in his most dignified manner said:

“ ‘ Kill me, sir, captain! Yes, kill me as you killed my son; as you would kill my people if they were to come to you. You have made me sorrowful; my life you have made dark. You have killed the child of my heart: why not kill the father also? You may kill me, sir, captain; but you shall not live in peace. I will still follow your footsteps. I will not leave my home, but will be with the spirits among the waterfalls, among the rocks, in the river, in the winds. Wherever you go I shall be with you. You will not see me, but you will fear the spirit of the old chief and will grow cold. The great spirits have spoken. I have done.’ ”

“ You see, the Indians believed that the presence of a spirit was manifest in a cool breeze. That was what old Tenieya meant when he declared they would be startled by his unseen presence and ‘ grow cold.’ ”

CHAPTER XXIV

TO CLOUD'S REST

“ DID they kill the old chief? ” inquired John.

“ No; they gave him a good supper, for they were all deeply impressed by the fearlessness of Tenieya. But they kept up their search for his tribe for several days, though not another Indian could they find. Then they decided to make an expedition to the high Sierras, for they believed a good many of the redmen had gone to the hiding-places there. They made the old chief go with them.

“ When the soldiers had gone about twenty miles, and were far up above the Yosemite Valley, they saw some smoke rising not far ahead of them, so they concluded that they must be near some Indian village. The soldiers advanced cautiously, quietly secured the outlying pickets, and then made a rush upon the camp. They come so swiftly that not a soul escaped.

“ Although it was certain that not all of the

Yosemites were there, it was decided to depart with those that had been taken, leaving the others for a later pursuit. The Indian women and children were allowed to march freely, but the squaws soon insisted upon taking upon their own shoulders the burdens that had been assigned to the warriors. When the white men protested against such an unnatural custom—at least it seemed so to them—the squaws themselves rebelled so strongly that at last the soldiers left them to their own customs and ways, and in that manner they all marched back to Fresno.

“The war was supposed to be ended now, and, after several months had passed, Tenieya begged so hard to return with his tribe to his home in the valley that permission at last was granted. Soon after the Yosemites came back here, complaints began to rise that the whites were having their horses and cattle stolen by the Indians. It did not make any difference when it was learned that many of the losses were due to the work of thieving Mexicans—they cried out against the Indians just the same. Finally the clamor became so loud after five prospectors had crept into the Yosemite Valley looking for gold and lost their lives there——”

“ Did the Indians kill the prospectors? ” asked Scott.

“ That was the report, though personally I have my doubts. At all events, the feeling against the Yosemitees became so great that at last a government expedition was sent against the tribe. Some friends of the dead miners acted as guides, along with some of the men who had been in the valley before. They surprised and captured a few of the Indians, although Tenieya and the rest of the tribe managed to elude their first attempts to get them. When the dead bodies of the five miners were found, of course the white soldiers were more angry than ever, and they instantly shot the few Yosemitees whom they had captured.”

“ What? ” exclaimed John. “ Shot their prisoners? ”

“ That is just what was done. Of course it was unjust and cruel, but the men were angry at the death of the miners, and at such times did not stop to think of mercy or even of justice. They kept up a search for the Indians, but the Yosemitees had every advantage, for they were familiar with every hiding-place in the valley. Still the search was so keen that the Yosemitees finally fled for shelter to their

friends, the Monos, another tribe of Indians whose home was among the Sierras. They were so successfully hidden by their allies that for a long time they were safe.

“After the pursuit apparently had been abandoned, the report is that the Yosemite, when they saw how successful their friends, the Monos, were in stealing horses from the whites, began to try the same schemes for themselves. So matters went on until the Yosemite gradually made their way back to their old homes in the valley. The report spread that, having been so successful in stealing horses from the whites, they next began to steal from the Monos, and then the troubles began again.

“The Monos were as bitter as the white men. The Yosemite were more confident now, and, instead of hiding in the cañons, they had camps in the valley—the largest being at the entrance to Indian Cañon. Then one day the stealthy Monos pounced upon them, and there was a fight to the finish. Tenieya was the one warrior whom the Monos were most desirous of securing, but the shrewd old sachem for a time was more than a match for his foes. One of the younger chiefs of the Monos at last drove Tenieya to bay. He discharged arrow after

arrow at the fearless old sachem, but was unable to hit him. At last after all his arrows had been used, the young chief threw a stone, which hit Tenieya in the head and felled him to the ground. Instantly all the other 'braves' were braver now, and with one accord they rushed upon their fallen foe, every one throwing a stone upon the helpless man, until at last he literally was stoned to death. A few of the Yosemite braves escaped, but all the rest were killed—that is, all but the old warriors and the women and children."

"What became of the few braves that escaped?" inquired Scott.

"Their spirits were broken, their tribe was annihilated, they had no home, they dared not seek a refuge among the Monos, so they all—there were only eight, it is said—made their way to Hunt's store at Fresno and became guides. Soon after this time many people began to go to the Yosemite, and trusty guides were in demand."

"They are all dead now, aren't they?"

"Yes. These few Diggers you occasionally see here are supposed to be their descendants."

"The white men must have felt mighty proud of themselves after they had driven the

Yosemites out of their home and had destroyed almost the whole tribe!" said Lee warmly. "It was a low-down trick!"

"They didn't all feel the same. There was Major Savage, for example; he was in command for a time, as I told you. He was so enraged over the way the miners and the whites had acted toward the Yosemites that he boldly and openly made a protest to the government. Of course his protest made more trouble, and finally a fellow named Harvey—a desperado—became so fighting mad at the major that he attacked him."

"What happened to the major?" asked Scott.

"He was killed."

"That's the way of it!" declared Scott. "You let a man stand up for such a people as the Indians and see what happens to him! And yet we are sending protests to Russia today against her treatment of the Jews!"

"What was done to the man that killed the major?"

"I never heard."

"I can tell you!" spoke up Scott.

"What was it?" said John.

"Oh, he was treated as a hero. The papers

were full of stories of what a brave man he was. Very likely they claimed that he was compelled to shoot the major in self-defense. That's the way it usually is."

"I think not quite so bad as that," said the old gentleman quietly. "You must not forget the times when these things were done. There was a wild and somewhat reckless class of men that had been drawn here by the gold fever. Then, too, the Indians, though they were without doubt treated harshly, were not without their faults——"

"Their chief fault was that they happened to have something—land or something like that—which the white men wanted—and took!" exclaimed John. "What a shame our whole treatment of the original Americans has been. I feel as Scott does—we ought to pull out our own beams before we pluck out the motes from the eyes of any other nation on earth!"

"This has all been interesting," remarked Larcum, who had been silent throughout the telling of the story of the death of Tenieya. "I think it's about time we decided on our plans for to-morrow."

"I guess Jack would like a rest," suggested Scott, mindful of his previous conversation

with Larcum. "In fact, I would not mind one myself."

"I don't want a rest," asserted John promptly. "You fellows seem to think I ought to be rolled up in cotton batting and laid away in the dark."

"What is a good trip to-morrow; one that is not too hard and yet will help us to see more of this wonderful valley?" inquired Scott of the old gentleman who had been entertaining them.

"That's hard to tell; there are so many. Perhaps a ride to Mirror Lake would interest you and not be too hard. There's one thing you must not forget—the Yosemite is a hard place to see, though what you do see pays for all it costs in labor or time."

"How far is this Mirror Lake from the Sentinel Hotel?" asked Lee.

"About three miles."

"Can we drive all the way?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do we see when we get there?"

"That depends upon the time you start."

"How is that?"

"At this time of the year, if you reach the lake about eight o'clock in the morning, you'll

see a marvelous reflection of the North and South Domes. You'll see a reflection of Mount Watkins, too. The surface of the lake in the early morning is usually without a ripple, and the picture of the great peaks in it is something you'll never forget. If you are there about eight, you'll see the sun rise over the Half Dome, and you'll see it all right in the waters of the lake. That's the way it got its name. Sometimes, when there is a full moon, you can get a wonderful sight at night, too."

"That suits me—everything except getting up so early," laughed Lee.

"You can stand that—once in your life," said Scott. "You won't be coming this way again very soon, and you ought to make the most of your chance now."

"We'll be back here by noon," suggested John. "We ought to be thinking of what we'll do then—or will you leave that till the time comes?"

"You might take a drive about the valley itself in the afternoon," said the old gentleman. "That will fully repay you."

"That's what we'll do, then," said John. "What do you say, Larc?" he added, turning to his huge friend as he spoke.

“ I say it’s fine; though I don’t believe I’ll join you,” replied Larcum.

“ Why not? What are you going to do? ” inquired John.

“ Larc’s too tired,” laughed Lee. “ If you carry a mountain of flesh up a mountain of granite, what will you have when you come down? ”

“ It’s a great waste of energy for a man to have too much to carry around with him,” said Scott soberly. “ Now look at Lee. He doesn’t really cast a shadow, he’s so thin. No wonder he’s ready for something more to-morrow. You’d better let Larc sleep late and leave him alone.”

“ Yes,” joined in Larcum drowsily. “ Don’t call me in the morning. You all just start off early to see the sun rise in Mirror Lake. I’ll take your word for it all when you come back.”

“ Poor little Larkie,” laughed Scott, as he arose and patted his huge friend on the shoulders. “ No wonder his fond mother is fearful her little boy works too hard for the T. G. & P.”

Early the following morning, a full hour before the other boys were out of bed, Larcum

had breakfasted and, mounted upon a hardy pony, was riding along the trail that led to the summit of Cloud's Rest. Beside him, mounted upon another horse, was the man who had come from San Francisco the preceding day. Behind the saddle of the man a bundle was strapped, and in the bundle was a coil of rope, which had puzzled Larcum, though he had asked no questions concerning his companion's purpose.

In silence the two riders proceeded on their way, and soon were on the steeper trail which led to the peak they were seeking. As they drew nearer the lofty summit, Larcum saw that the massive walls of the Yosemite were in plain view. Beyond were the towering heights of the high Sierras. Across Tenaya Cañon (the present form of spelling the name of the heroic old chieftain of the Yosemite tribe) rose the summit of Mount Watkins, eighty-three hundred feet in height. The tips of Mount Hoffman, Tenaya's Peak (with the glistening waters of the lake of the same name far below), of Lyell, Clark, Starr King, Dana, and other mountains came forth into view. Yet, impressive as the wild scenery was, Larcum was thinking far more of the purpose of the early morn-

ing ride than he was of the grandeur of the lofty mountains all about him.

Suddenly Larcum's companion halted, and, in a low voice, said: "There's a horse just ahead of us. It's loose, too. What does it mean?"

Larcum did not reply, and in a moment the horse, which his companion had seen, approached. A saddle and bridle were still on the animal, though the latter was broken.

"Look here! This is strange!" Larcum's companion suddenly leaped to the ground as he spoke, and, leaving his horse, at once drew near the border of a cañon beside the trail. Stooping, he picked up a coat from the ground, and, turning to Larcum, he inquired, "Do you know whose this is?"

"Yes," said Larcum slowly, after he had inspected the garment. "It's the coat that reporter wore yesterday."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISCOVERY IN THE CAÑON

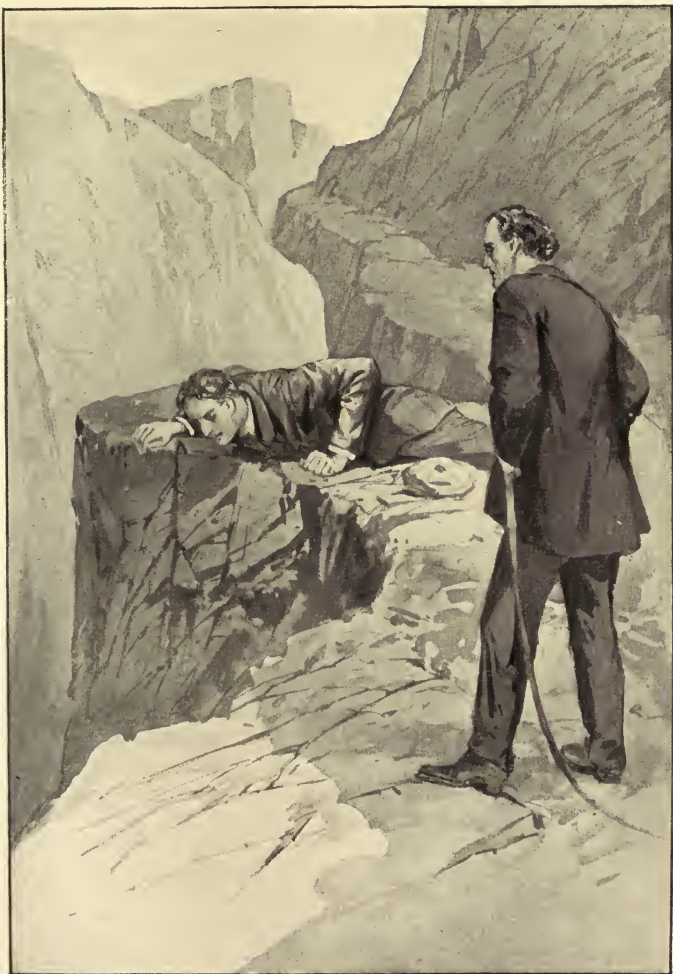
“YOU hold both horses. I’ll be back in a minute,” said Larcum’s companion, as he hastily tossed his bridle to the young giant and again turned toward the border of the trail.

Larcum grasped both bridles and watched the man as he threw himself on the ground and peered over the edge into the depths of the cañon below him. The horse, which had been found riderless on the way, approached Larcum and was greeted by a low whinny of recognition from the animals he was holding. Plainly the three were from the same stable and recognized one another in the meeting on the mountainside. Larcum, however, was too deeply interested in what his companion was doing to give much attention to the horses. He saw the man lying prone on the ground, still peering into the depths below him.

Several minutes elapsed before the man

arose, and then he turned back to Larcum and said gently: "I wish you would go up there where I was and look down into the cañon. See what you can make of the sight right near the crag below the oak. I don't mean the main cañon; just the little spur that is right below you. There's something interesting there which I should like to have you see. Perhaps your eyes are keener than mine."

Without a word Larcum quickly sought the place indicated by his companion. Throwing himself on the ground, he peered over the border at the depths below him. At first the impression of the awfulness of the depths almost appalled him. Bleak rocks, bare stretches of granite in the precipices, the little stream far down in the valley that looked no larger than a tiny brook, were below him. The very silence that rested over the region was like a pall. The scene was grand, but for a time Larcum was unable to discover anything which might have aroused the manifest interest of the man who had gazed so long into the depths. Recalling the specific directions which had been given him, he looked away from the main cañon to the part, or spur, which was more directly beneath him. He saw the jutting crag,



THE AWFULNESS OF THE DEPTHS ALMOST APPALLED HIM.—Page 304.

the overhanging oak, but for a time was unable to see anything more. Suddenly Larcum uttered a low exclamation. What was that right by the loose rocks at the foot of the crag? Surely it could not be the body of a man! And yet, as Larcum gazed intently at the object, he became more and more convinced that he was looking at the body of some one who had fallen to the depths below. A feeling of horror crept over him as he made out the outlines. The legs were in plain sight, an outstretched arm extended over the edge of the rock, though the head could not be seen. Was this the reporter? Larcum looked still more earnestly at the motionless body. There was no evidence of life to be seen, and a hasty reflection convinced the excited young giant that no one could have fallen to those depths and still be living. The crag must be at least two hundred feet below the place where he was lying.

“ What do you find? ”

Larcum looked up as he heard the question and found his companion standing beside him. “ Some one has fallen,” he said, trembling as he spoke.

“ You can see the body, can you? ”

“ Yes, it’s straight down there, right by the rock as you said.”

“ Can you make out the head? ”

“ No. I can see only the body, the legs, and one arm.”

“ Can you see the hand of that arm? ”

“ No,” replied Larcum, as he looked again at the body far below.

“ And you say you can’t make out the head? ”

“ No.”

“ Why is that? ”

“ You don’t mean—you don’t suppose—you——” began Larcum.

“ I don’t imply anything,” broke in the man sharply. “ All I want to know is just what you can see. How wide do you think that shelf is, the one where the body is resting? ”

“ I can’t estimate it very well. Comparing it with the body there, I should say it must be six or eight feet.”

“ You are sure the arm is over the edge of the rock? ”

“ Yes. I can see that very plainly.”

“ Yet you can’t see the hand? ”

“ No,” replied Larcum, after he had taken

another long look. "I can't see the hand. Why?"

Ignoring the question, the man continued, "Is the body lying on its face or on its back?"

"I should say on its face. I can't just make it out, though."

"Can you tell the color of the clothes?"

"There isn't any coat," said Larcum slowly, glancing at the coat which had been found on the trail as he spoke. "The trousers seem to be of the same color as this coat," he added, in a voice still lower.

"And so you conclude?"

"That they belonged to the same person. The man left his coat here and then slipped or fell into the cañon."

"How?"

"That I can't say."

"Do you find any marks of a struggle?"

"No; but I should not expect to find any. If a man slipped or toppled over here, he'd go straight to the rocks below."

"Is that rock directly beneath us or does it jut out for a few feet? How do you measure that with your eye?"

"It juts out a few feet."

"That is my opinion. Just one thing more.

Do you suppose, if you were to fall over here, you would strike in about the place where this body lies? ”

“ Perhaps not exactly, but it’s almost in line with us.”

“ Suppose you did fall over and struck the rock there, what would happen to you? ”

“ Just what has happened to this poor chap.”

“ Do you think so? Suppose we try it? ”

“ What do you mean? ” said Larcum quickly, glancing sharply at his companion as he spoke.

There was a faint trace of a smile on the stranger’s face, but, without speaking, he picked up a stone the size of his hand and dropped it to the cliff. The stone struck the rocky projection true to its aim, and bounded far over the border and fell into the depths of the greater cañon.

“ We’ll try it once more,” said the man. Again he dropped a stone, somewhat larger than the one he had just used, and this one also bounded from the cliff as its predecessor had done. “ Let me try it with this,” once more said the stranger, as he lifted in his arms the fallen branch of a tree. The small log was borne to the border of the trail, and a moment later was pushed over. Falling, the branch

struck the cliff, and, like the rocks that had preceded it, it plunged over the edge and fell noiselessly into the far depths of the cañon.

“What is all that for?” asked Larcum, puzzled to understand what the actions of his companion meant. “I don’t see what you’re trying to do.”

“Not one of those stones or that log lodged there on the cliff, did it?”

“No. What of it?”

“Do you really think that if a man should fall here and should strike the crags below that he would lodge there? Don’t you believe that his body would bound or roll over the edge?”

“I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Well, I have.”

“Don’t you really think that is the body of some man that fell into the cañon?” asked Larcum soberly.

“I’m not saying it isn’t.”

“How could it be anything else? A man’s body might be caught there and held. It’s different from a falling rock or a piece of wood.”

“Yes; it’s different.”

“What are you going to do now?”

“ Did the reporter say anything about his expecting any one to come? ”

“ Not a word, though his friend came up here, too.”

“ So you said.”

“ What has become of him? ”

“ If the reporter fell over the cliff, what do you think his friend would be likely to do? ”

“ Go back to the hotel for help.”

“ Precisely.”

“ And, because we haven't seen him, you think he didn't go? ”

“ That fact is not to be ignored.”

“ But there may be other trails,” suggested Larcum. “ He might have gone down some one that we haven't seen.”

“ That's possible.”

“ Then I don't see what you're driving at.”

“ How long was it that the reporter said he might be gone? ”

“ Three days.”

“ I want you to take your horse and the one we found here loose on the trail and go back to the hotel.”

“ When? ”

“ After luncheon. We'll have that now.”

“ Aren't you going back? ”

“ Not now.”

“ When will you come? ”

“ It all depends. I am of the opinion that no one at the Sentinel knows that we came up here this morning.”

“ Except the hostler,” suggested Larcum.

“ I hardly think he does, but the fact that you are bringing two horses back will satisfy him.”

“ He may recognize this other horse as the one he let the reporter have yesterday. What can I tell him if he should ask me about that? ”

“ Don't ‘ tell ’ him anything. Just let him have the horse. I shall trust you not to say that I am still up here on the trail to Cloud's Rest. Besides, I may be back very soon, anyway.”

“ I'll do my best,” said Larcum, still mystified by the directions he had received and puzzled still more by the plan of his companion to remain alone on the mountain.

The luncheon they had brought, however, was an added incentive to silence, and the young giant was soon so busily engaged in his repast that the absence of conversation was in part at least ignored.

A half-hour afterward Larcum mounted his

horse and prepared for the descent of the mountain. "Do you want me to stay near the hotel until you come back?" he inquired, as he lifted the bridle rein.

"No. Go ahead with your plans just as if I wasn't anywhere in the country."

Still mystified and a trifle angry that he should have been eliminated from the plan of his recent companion, Larcum followed the downward trail. The riderless horse followed closely and apparently did not require any attention.

As Larcum rode on, the strange suspicions and stranger actions of the man with whom he had set forth in the early morning from the Sentinel Hotel became more puzzling to him as he thought them over. Was it not truly the body of the reporter which had been discovered on the cliff? And why did the man desire to remain alone on the mountain? What did it all mean?

The puzzled young traveler had not found any solution when at last he turned from the steep trail into the level road of the valley. He was still busied with his conjectures when he was aroused by a hail from an approaching carriage. Glancing quickly behind him as he

recognized the voice of John, he saw his three friends seated in the surrey, which was only a few yards in his rear.

“Where have you been, Larc?” inquired John, as the rider halted for his friends to come nearer. “Why have you got two horses? You didn’t ride them both, did you?”

“Not at the same time,” replied Larcum quietly.

“What did you leave us behind for, Larc?”

“You were all more tired than I was. I didn’t want to take a nice old-ladylike ride. I wanted the real thing.”

“You must have had it,” laughed Scott, “if the dejected appearance of your horses goes for anything.”

“I did. Where have you been? What have you been doing?”

“This morning we rode up to Mirror Lake and saw the sunrise in the lake. It was one of the finest sights I ever saw!” said John, with enthusiasm.

“It isn’t so ‘fine,’ as you call it, as to see it rise in the sky. If you would get up early enough some morning to see that——”

“That’s all right, Larc,” broke in Lee. “You are about like everybody else that al-

ways insists that the thing you didn't see was the one thing you ought never to have missed."

"Larc, did you see any wild animals on your trip to-day?" asked Scott.

"No. Did you?"

"What kind of an animal is it, Larc, that has one horn, a greenlike outer covering, is dangerous if you get too near it, can make as good time as a racehorse——"

"I guess you saw a cow," interrupted Larcum.

"No. It wasn't a cow," said Scott soberly. "I know what a cow is like, for I saw one once when I was in the country. Besides, a cow has more than one horn."

"Then it must have been either an automobile or a rhinoceros," said Larcum dryly, as starting his horse into a run, he speedily left his companions.

CHAPTER XXVI

COACHING AGAIN

MINDFUL of the words which the man, whom the railroad people had sent into the valley in response to his message, had spoken, Larcum endeavored to banish from his mind his interest in the outcome of the search. As the days passed and not a word of the reporter or his companion was heard, nor did the stranger himself return to the Sentinel Hotel, Larcum's feeling of interest somehow, in a measure, departed. It seemed to the young giant that his own suggestions and investigations had been entirely ignored. His word had been deemed of sufficient importance to warrant the sending of a man to the scene. His aid had been invoked to the extent of asking him to accompany the man at least a part of the way on the trail to the summit of Cloud's Rest, and then he had been abruptly dismissed. The recollection of the sight of the body of the unknown man who had fallen into the cañon was still vivid in Lar-

cum's mind, though, after the questions his companion had asked, he was by no means positive that it really was the body of a man he had seen. But, if not the corpse of some unfortunate traveler, what was it? His perplexity was increased by the story which the California college boy related of an accident that had occurred the preceding summer, when a party of three young men had insisted upon going to the projecting rock at Glacier Point, unaccompanied by a guide, and one of the trio had slipped and fallen, in the ascent, upon the rocks far below. A search of two days had been required before the body of the unfortunate boy had been found and secured, and then only after long and severe exertions on the part of the band which had volunteered to make the search.

Larcum was beginning to question his own long-continued silence. Was he doing right in withholding the report of what had occurred when he and his companion had made their grewsome discovery? Suppose the stranger was not what he had represented himself to be? Larcum had no proofs, and the man had not suggested, much less presented, any papers of identification. Larcum was so sincere in his

feelings that the fact that the railroad company would not be likely to have sent any papers to him, a boy, did not present itself. He was troubled, and his manifest anxiety was noted by his friends. Not even to Scott, however, to whom he previously had explained some of his fears or misgivings, did he now talk of the matter which was uppermost in his own mind.

The time, however, was fully occupied, and, if Larcum did not completely enter into the spirit of travel in the wonderful valley, there was no lack of interest on the part of his three companions. Led by a guide, the four boys climbed Mount Watkins, camping out for a night on its summit and returned the following day to their hotel. Another expedition, to the Tuolumne Cañon, twelve miles distant, with its numerous waterfalls in the stream that ran through the cañon, almost parallel to the course of the boisterous Merced, was doubly interesting, not only from its own beauty, but also from the grandeur of the immense overhanging cliffs.

A ride on horseback twenty miles below to the Hetch Hetchy Valley, a marvelous counterpart of the Yosemite Valley itself, though on a much smaller scale, had provided its own

interest in its numerous waterfalls and frowning cliffs. The Tuolumne meadows, Mount Starr King, the top of Sentinel Dome, all were visited, and, had it not been for the opposition of Larcum, the ascent of Mount Lyell would have been attempted, as the guide whom they had daily employed was most eager to take his interesting party up the difficult trail.

“It’ll take four days,” suggested Larcum grimly, when the boys were discussing the guide’s suggestion the evening after their return from the ascent of Mount Starr King. “Isn’t that so, guide?”

“We might do it in three and a half days,” replied the guide.

Larcum laughed as he said, “That is better, but we can’t count on that, I’m sure.”

“What’s a little matter of a half-day to you, Larc?” asked John.

“I’ll have to be getting back to my office, or the T. G. & P. will be in trouble. You seem to forget that I am a business man.”

“That’s why you didn’t want to go on when we were in the Hetch Hetchy Valley,” said Scott. “I believe in doing things right when you are on the spot.”

“ Why don't you, then? ” retorted Larcum.
“ What more did you want? ”

“ I wanted to go to Till Till Valley; it was only five miles farther. Then, there was Lake Eleanor, Lake Vernon, and Mount Ranchesia, and I don't know what else.”

“ You might be thinking a little of what you did see, as well as what you didn't,” retorted Larcum. “ That's always the way with some people! I was reading the other day a funny thing from *Punch*——”

“ You! ” broke in Scott derisively. “ You! Larcum Brown! Do you mean to tell me that you, who didn't enjoy England,¹ and all the while we were there were belittling the country, the people, the ruins, the life, and almost everything else you saw—you—you really found something funny in *Punch*? It is more wonderful than the view from Glacier Point! I can't make it seem true——”

“ Keep still, Scott, and let Larc tell his story,” interrupted John.

“ An Englishman was riding along a street in a little village——”

“ Where? When? What? Who? Why? ” broke in Scott.

¹ See “ Four boys and a Fortune.”

“ An Englishman was riding along a village street in a motor——”

“ In a what? ” again interrupted Scott.

“ If you don't keep still, this story will be ' continued in our next, ' ” said Larcum.

“ Go on. I'll be good if there's any fear of that.”

“ As I was saying, an Englishman was driving his own car once through the street of a little village. He wasn't keeping as good a lookout as he ought, and all at once, when he turned a sharp corner, he ran right into a butcher-boy who was carrying a basket on his arm. The basket was full of chops, bacon, liver, and kidneys——”

“ So was the boy, ” suggested Scott.

“ Keep still, I tell you! ” commanded Larcum. “ The English motorist was going at a pretty good pace, and, not keeping a good lookout, when he turned the corner he ran straight into the butcher-boy, striking him squarely in the back.”

“ Did it hurt? ”

“ Of course the boy was thrown to the ground, and everything in his basket was sent in every direction. The English motorist was really a very kind-hearted gentleman, and,

when he saw the damage he had done, he instantly stopped his car, jumped out, and ran to the help of his victim. Lifting the lad in his arms, the English gentleman tenderly said, 'Are you hurt, my lad?''

"Well, was he? What did the English lad have to say for himself?" demanded Scott, as his friend remained silent.

"Go on, Larc! Tell us all about it," added Lee.

"What do you stop there for? Is that the end of the story?" added John.

"The boy was dazed," said Larcum, after a brief silence. "The story is so pathetic that, whenever I tell it, I always make it a rule to stop where I did for a minute or two to recover my self-possession."

"Same as some trains stop twenty minutes for refreshments," laughed Scott.

"Well, the poor, dazed, little, defenseless English butcher-boy who, with his basket of orders on his arm, had been so ruthlessly bumped by the English gentleman that had hit him in the back with his motor and scattered the contents of his basket all about the village street, at last was able to comprehend the query of his terrified and anxious questioner. Rubbing

his little eyes with both his tiny, eke greasy, also grimy, ditto dirty, likewise chubby little fists, he feebly ejaculated: 'Where's my liver? Where are my kidneys?' "

"Is that a true story, Larc?" asked Lee.

"I saw it in *Punch*."

"Is it funny?"

"I saw it in *Punch*."

"Some of the funniest people in the world——" began Scott.

"Tell us the joke, Larc!" pleaded John.

"Had the poor little English lad really lost his lights and his liver?" asked Lee soberly.

"That's the joke," retorted Larcum. "You are just beginning to see it."

"What has all that to do with me, Larc?" said Scott. "I must say that I am not at this moment conscious of the loss of any of my anatomical possessions."

"No; but you will be," said Larcum. "Just as soon as you get home you'll begin to talk of the things you didn't see. You'll forget all about the Sentinel and the Three Brothers and the Yosemite Falls and the Bridal Veil, and you'll be saying every time that we wouldn't let you see Tell Tale Valley, nor——"

“Till Till Valley, Larc,” suggested Scott, with a laugh.

“It’s all the same!” declared Larcum.

“What is the plan for to-morrow?” asked John.

“I’m ready for anything,” said Lee.

“I’ve been thinking that it’s about time we started for the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees. We don’t want Scott to miss that, and I’m quite willing to see it myself before I return to the labors of my official position in the T. G. & P.”

“Have you found out how we are to go?” inquired Scott.

“Yes; we can take the stage from here to-morrow after luncheon and go straight through to Wawona. There’s a fine hotel there, and we can stay as long as we want to,” said Larcum.

“I thought you were anxious to get back to work, Larc,” suggested Lee.

“I did not say I was ‘anxious.’ I said my services might be needed; that’s all.”

“How long a ride is it to Wawona?” asked Scott.

“Let me see—it’s about four miles to Bridal Veil Falls, and about four more to Inspiration

Point, and then, after we've climbed some more, we go on and on and up and up, and then we go down and down about as many miles more. It must be a ride of sixteen or eighteen miles from here—half the way up, and then half the way down before we get into Wawona."

"You say we go 'up and up'—how far up?" asked Lee.

"We have to climb to an elevation of sixty-five hundred feet."

"Do we ride or walk?" asked John.

"I say, fellows, let's ride only part of the way," suggested Lee. "We can take the coach halfway and then walk all the rest of the way. It'll be going down hill then, Larc says."

"That's a good suggestion, Lee," said Larcum. "We can send our baggage all on by the coach to Wawona, and it'll be there when we arrive."

"Do you want to tramp through the woods and over these mountains after dark?" asked Scott. "You know there are bears and mountain lions and——"

"Squirrels and deer, and woodpeckers, too," suggested Lee.

“ All right; I’m not complaining. I’ll be ready if all the rest of you are,” said Scott quickly.

As soon as luncheon had been served the following day, the four boys secured seats in the coach for Wawona. The summer day was warm, but the four horses, the prospect of a ride into a region they had not as yet seen, the interest of their fellow-passengers—among whom was their newly formed acquaintance, the California college boy—as well as the prospect of beholding the wonderful giants among all the trees of the world, all combined to increase the interest of the young travelers.

A steady but not swift gait was maintained by the horses as the road led through the level sandy stretch of the Yosemite Valley itself. Back over the way by which they had entered, the coach at first moved until another and final view of the Bridal Veil Falls, almost directly above the party, was had.

Then, following the rough road that led up the side of the mountain, the four horses slowly drew the heavily-laden coach. Up and still farther upward the toilsome ascent was made, until at last the coach halted on Inspiration Point.

Here the most wonderful of all the views of the wonderful valley were to be had. The bleak precipices that formed its sides, the many waterfalls—some only tiny ribbons of water and others vying in grandeur with the tremendous Yosemite Falls itself on the farther side of the little plain—were all within plain sight. Directly beneath, and far below the very spot where the coach had halted, were crags and majestic trees, and away down in the depths of the valley below the silver Merced sped swiftly on its way.

For a time all the travelers were silent as they gazed at the awe-inspiring sight. Larcum was the first of the four boys to speak, as he said, "It's only eight or ten miles more. Let's walk."

His suggestion was at once acted upon, and, as the boys leaped to the ground, not one of them was aware that one of the most exciting experiences of their trip was before them.

CHAPTER XXVII

A MOUNTAIN LION

WAITING for the coach to precede them, so as to avoid the heavy clouds of dust which the horses and the great wheels stirred up, the five boys—for Dana Watkins, the California college boy, as has been said, had joined them—turned to follow the road which led along the mountainside. The air was cool and invigorating, and back among the trees frequent glimpses were had of dull-colored banks of snow, which even the heat of the summer sun had not entirely melted. Occasional glimpses of the deep valleys beyond were also had. The flight of a bird and the sound of the wind in the tall tree-tops were matters of interest in the solitude of the wonderful forests.

“This is great!” exclaimed Lee, with enthusiasm. “I’m glad I came.”

“You have a good long tramp before you,” suggested Scott. “Maybe you would do bet-

ter if you should wait until we're in the hotel at Wawona before you let your delight run away with you."

"Where is that 'good long tramp'?" laughed Lee. "I fancied we were the only ones here, now that the coach has gone on ahead of us."

"Oh, quit that!" retorted Scott.

"But you referred to a 'tramp,'" persisted Lee. "I'll leave it to the boys."

"Scott probably was thinking of the men that held up our train; he didn't mean just the regulation tramp, you see," suggested John.

"By the way, has anything more been heard of those men?" asked Dana.

"Better ask Larc," said John. "He has had that particular task in hand. In fact, I think he has already invested two or three times over the amount he was to receive as a reward. Heard anything new, Larc?" asked John, as he turned to his big companion.

"You see the papers as much as I do," growled Larcum.

"Yes, I know I do; but the newspapers haven't had a word about these fellows for sev-

eral days, or, if they have, I haven't seen anything."

"Well, you've seen as much as I have," was Larcum's rejoinder.

"Look yonder, fellows!" exclaimed John, pointing eagerly, as he spoke, to a flower of brilliant red that was growing on a bank not far away.

"That's the snow flower," said Scott, as all the boys turned aside to examine the beautiful plant. "It is said to be the reddest flower that grows."

"It looks like a big piece of crimson asparagus," said Dana, as the boys leaned low on the bank.

"Why is it called the 'snow flower'?" asked John.

"Because it grows on a bank where there has been a snowdrift, and it comes up soon after the snow is melted. The flower is larger and brighter in the Yosemite than anywhere else in the world."

"Outside 'the world' I suppose you find it just as red as it is here in the Yosemite, don't you?" inquired John soberly.

"I've never been farther east than Denver," laughed Dana.

“ Oh, you ought to see it in Boston! ” said Larcum mockingly. “ There I’m sure it beats the world. ”

“ It would if we should plant it, I’m sure, too, ” retorted John.

“ I’m sure that you’re sure, all right, ” said Larcum. “ I think I’ll pull up one and ship it to Chicago for a trial there. ”

“ Don’t you do it! ” exclaimed Dana quickly.

“ Why not? ” demanded Larcum, turning quickly to Dana.

“ There’s a law against picking any flowers in the valley. ”

“ This isn’t the valley; this is the side of a mountain! ” declared Larcum, as he advanced to pull the brilliant flower from the ground.

“ Don’t do it, Larc! ” pleaded John.

“ Why not? ” again demanded the young giant.

“ It’s against the law. ”

“ ‘ Law! ’ ‘ Law! ’ There can’t be any law here. Besides, no one would see me except you, and you don’t count. ”

“ The law is the same whether any one sees you or not. ”

“ All right; I’ll be good, ” assented Larcum, with a laugh.

“Look at that bush yonder,” said John, eager to change the subject of conversation. “Its back is a deep red, and its branches are all twisted and tangled. It’s a mighty striking thing. What is it?”

“Manzanita bush,” answered Dana.

“What’s that?”

“The name of the bush you’re looking at. You’ll find lots of them in the Yosemite Valley.”

“I’ve seen lots of them already,” said Larcum. “Jack has been so busy thinking how many parasangs Clearchus could march in a day over these mountains that he’s just got around to see this bush.”

“It’s a beauty, anyway,” said John quietly.

“You’re certainly correct in your opinion,” joined in Scott, as the boys resumed their advance. “I’d like to suggest humbly that you should not forget these great trees all about us. I never saw such timber in my life.”

“Very likely. It doesn’t grow in Wall Street; neither on Fifth Avenue,” said Larcum.

“It grows here.”

“ It certainly does. Now, my friend,” Larcum added, turning to John, “ tell me what good your study of Greek would do you if you were to come in here to buy a hundred acres of this timber.”

“ I wouldn’t buy it—to cut it down. I’d feel as if I’d almost committed homicide to use an ax on one of these trees. I’ll tell you what I’ll do, though, Larc,” John added quickly. “ I’ll match my Greek against your knowledge of pork, and we’ll see which of us can tell the most of the different kinds of trees we can see from here.”

“ Done,” said Larcum promptly. “ We’ll stop right where we are and try the trick. What is that great tree yonder? ” he asked, as he pointed to a marvelously symmetrical tree to his right.

“ It’s a pine,” answered John.

“ Correct. There’s one for each of us,” he added, speaking to Scott. “ You keep tally.”

“ But how is it ‘ one for each of us ’? ” asked John. “ I was the one that told.”

“ But I knew, the same as you did,” said Larcum.

“ Did you? ” laughed John. “ Well, I’ll go

one better than. What kind of a pine is it, Larc? ”

“ Why it’s a—it’s just a pine tree,” replied Larcum lamely.

“ It’s a sugar pine,” continued John. “ In botany it’s known as the *Pinus lambertiana*.”

“ Is it? ”

“ Yes, sir; it is. Honestly, Larc, did you know that? ”

“ I didn’t know all the Greek names; modern English is good enough for me.”

“ That’s one for me alone— isn’t it, fellows? ” demanded John of his companions.

“ It surely is! Yes. That’s right, Jack! ” they declared.

“ Very good. One for Larc and two for me. Now it’s my turn. Larc, what’s that tree right in line with the sugar pine—that big fellow, the third tree back? ”

“ That’s a pine, too.”

“ Sure? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, what kind of a pine is it? It’s not like the sugar pine. You look at its cones and you’ll see. The sugar pines have cones that

are twenty inches long. You can see them there on the ground.”

“ It’s a pine tree, and that’s enough for me.”

“ It’s a yellow pine, Larc. Its botanical name is *Pinus ponderosa*.”

“ Go on! Pine is good enough for me.”

“ Two for Larc, four for me,” said John. Disregarding his friend’s protest, he inquired, “ Do you see that beautiful tree off to the left? ”

“ You mean that fir tree, don’t you? ”

“ Yes; but what kind of a fir is it? ”

“ *Bostonensis* swelled headibus,” replied Larcum promptly, as his companions shouted in their delight.

“ No; it’s a silver fir,” said John soberly. “ *Abies magnifica*.”

“ Same thing I had in mind!” declared Larcum promptly. “ You can’t get ahead of me that way. Tell me, Jack, the kind of a tree that is—that big one straight across the road from the fir.”

“ It’s a cedar.”

“ Correct. Now, speak up like a little man and tell this assemblage of learned college men its name in Greek.”

“ I don’t know what its Greek name is. Its botanical name is *Libocedrus decurrens*. What is it in Greek, Larc? ”

“ Clear-cuss parasangorum. Didn’t you know that, Jack? ”

“ No; I didn’t.”

“ Four for Jack, three for me, then,” said Larcum soberly. “ Yonder is a wonderful oak—just a plain, substantial English oak. Now we’re even, I take it.”

“ Hold on! ” exclaimed John. “ There’s a bushy tree right near the oak. What’s that? ”

“ Dogwood.”

“ What kind of dogwood? ”

“ I don’t know the breed, though in some ways it looks like a poodle.”

“ *Cornus florida*.”

“ Indeed! That’s fine. Is that dog-Latin or hog-Latin or Greek? ”

“ It’s botanical. What kind of a wild lilac is that yonder? ”

“ Yosemite.”

“ Pretty good for you, Larc. It’s the California lilac.”

“ What’s its name in pigeon-English? ”

“ In Latin it’s *Æsculus californica*. There’s

another kind of dogwood yonder. Tell us what it is."

"That, sir," said Larcum, pretending to study the bush critically, "is the old Mother Hubbard variety. It hasn't a bone anywhere in its possession."

"It's the Buckeye. That's the *Æsculus californica*, not the California lilac."

"Two off for Jack. Who wins?" asked Larcum, as the boys resumed their journey.

"I don't know, and I don't care," said Lee. "I'd rather have a good breath of this wonderful forest than the dog-eared, leather-bound Latin lexicon that Jack carries around in his cranium."

"No doubt about that," laughed John, "though I don't think I am any the less impressed by these great trees because I just happen to recall their names as they are known to the learned people of every land. I am very fond of trees——"

"And chips if they are dry enough," broke in Larcum. "Who'd want to digest a piece of boiled basswood? And yet, when I think of the diet of the Bostonian elect—codfish and dry johnny-cake—I don't know but that I'd prefer——"

Larcum stopped abruptly, as in a low voice Lee called the attention of his companions to a sight in the near-by forest. Not far off to the left of the boys five deer were seen. The timid animals were gazing at the approaching boys, and it was manifest from their attitude that they were governed more by curiosity than fear.

“ I wish I had a gun,” whispered Lee excitedly.

“ I’m glad you haven’t. Who’d want to shoot one of those little creatures? ” said John. “ They’re so tame you can see their eyes.”

For a moment the boys all stood still, watching the graceful little creatures before them. Occasionally the buck stamped his feet impatiently, as if he was tempted to advance and peer more closely at the strangers. A little fawn leaped about as if it was excited and yet was enjoying the experience.

“ You’re likely to see more of them before we’re down the mountain,” suggested Dana. “ I think we’d better go ahead, for we don’t want to be out here in the dark. We might run across a bear or something else that wouldn’t be so gentle with us——”

Dana stopped abruptly as John clutched him

by the arm, and in a loud whisper said, as he pointed to a long branch of a tree near where the deer were standing: "Look up there! What's that on that branch?"

Instantly all the boys were looking at the place indicated by John. Stretched at full length upon a branch of the tree, its coat not unlike the bark in its color, was an animal that to the excited beholders seemed to be not less than six feet in length. The beast was so intently watching the deer beneath it that apparently it had not noticed the approach of the young travelers. Its great head and long tail, its fierce expression and manifest strength, were of themselves sufficient to inspire terror. Yet the deer, unmindful of the presence of their enemy, were still standing gazing in their unabated curiosity at the intruders in their domain.

"What is it?" again whispered John.

"A mountain lion!" replied Dana, in a low voice.

"Let's get away from here," said John, glancing fearfully about him.

"No! No! Hold on! Stay where you are—ah!" Dana uttered an exclamation of anger, for at that moment the deer had turned and

darted swiftly away. As they came beneath the long branch, the mountain lion flung itself upon the fawn and bore it to the ground.

“Come back! Come back here!” shouted Dana to Larcum, who instantly had grasped a broken branch of a small tree in one hand, and a large rock in the other, and now was running swiftly toward the beast.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ROAD IN THE FOREST

“GET a rock! Find a club! Everybody get something!” called Dana excitedly, in a low voice. “Larc will be torn into pieces if we don’t help him! Come on! Come!”

Acting immediately upon the suggestion, every boy armed himself with clubs and stones and hastily followed Larcum, who now was advancing alone upon the mountain lion, which had not moved since first it had struck the fawn. The other deer had fled into the depths of the forest and were no longer to be seen.

“Hold on, Larc! Don’t do anything! Wait for us!” called Scott, who was running in advance of his companions. The young giant, however, was unmindful of the appeal and already was near the beast and its prey.

“Spread out a little, fellows!” ordered Dana, as the boys drew nearer. “Give the lion a chance to slink off into the woods. We’d better keep pretty close together and advance

in a semicircle. I wish Larc would let the beast go. It would be better for every one of us if he would."

"Larc won't do it," said Lee. "And I don't blame him, either. I wish I had a gun here; I'd show that sneaking thief how daylight would look inside his ribs."

"Have we any right to attack it?" asked John. "Don't the laws of the valley prohibit any one from attacking——"

"Never mind the 'laws' now, Jack!" said Scott. "We've got to look out for Larc. If we don't, we'll have to carry him on to Wawona in ribbons."

The boys had now caught up with Larcum, and, to their surprise, he made no objection to the plan suggested by Dana. Spreading out in the form of a semicircle, they all advanced upon the snarling animal, which now had lifted its head and, with its ears flattened and with such an expression of incarnate fury on its face as the boys had never before seen, was watching the approach of its enemies.

"Better give it up, Larc, and leave the fellow alone," suggested Dana, in a low voice. "The fawn's neck is broken and we can't do anything to help it now."

“ Think I’ll leave that slinking mountain lion to eat up that pretty little fawn? Not on your life! ” retorted Larcum. “ I’ll tackle him alone if the rest of you want to pull off. ” Larcum had not turned away his face from the savage beast while he was speaking, and, almost as if in response to the implied challenge, the mountain lion now was watching the young giant almost as if it was aware which of its approaching enemies was most to be feared.

“ No use, ” said Dana, shaking his head as he glanced at his comrades. “ We’ll have to do our best if we are to save Larc from the claws of the fiend. Its claws must be at least two inches long. ”

“ What shall we do? ” asked Lee, as the boys halted about twenty-five feet from the growling, snarling beast. “ It won’t attack us, will it? ”

“ That remains to be seen. Every fellow get a rock! ” he added, as he glanced about him. As every boy was provided with at least one missile, in addition to the stout club in his hand, Dana said: “ When I say three every fellow let him have it! Don’t miss! I don’t know what the lion will do, but follow up your throw with a yell that they can hear back at the

Sentinel Hotel. Shake your coats, wave your handkerchiefs, and jump up and down while you're yelling, and act as if you were going to rush on the sneaking thief. All ready?" he inquired, as he glanced about him.

"All ready," said Larcum quietly, as he, too, glanced at the line. John's face was of the color of chalk; Lee was fiercely watching the lion, which, although as yet it had not left its victim, was slowly lashing its tail and emitting a frequent snarl as if it was prepared either to attack its enemies or defend itself. Scott was keenly excited, though his bearing was quiet, while Dana was divided in his interest between Larcum and the lion.

"Now, then," began Dana. "One, two, three!" he shouted.

Together the five boys flung their missiles at the startled beast.

"Hi there!" "Get away from here!" "Back to the woods!" called the boys, at the same time brandishing their clubs, on the ends of which both Scott and Lee were waving their coats.

A fierce scream of anger or of pain came from the crouching beast as the missiles struck him. The stone which Larcum had hurled was

of the size of his fist, and, as the young giant had exerted all his strength in the throw and the rock had struck the beast in its lower jaw, the result was instantly manifest. Two of the other missiles had struck the beast—one on its side and the other in one of its fore-legs. Snarling, growling, whining, whimpering, the startled beast drew back a few paces, but instantly turned about and, lashing its sides with its tail, was facing the boys.

“Look out! Look out for a spring!” shouted Dana warningly, as Larcum dropped his coat and, with his club in his hands, stepped forward toward the crouching animal. “Look out! Look out!” he cried again, as the young giant apparently gave no heed to the warning cry.

“Come on, fellows!” called Scott, as he, too, advanced.

“Keep together! Keep together!” shouted Dana. “Yell! Make a noise! Scare the wits out of him! Shake your coats!”

Keeping well together in a line, the five boys slowly moved forward, the lion still growling savagely and watching their every movement.

“It’s going to jump for us!” said John, in a low voice.

“If it does, let him have your club,” suggested Dana.

The mountain lion had withdrawn about ten feet from the dead fawn, but it still manifestly was not minded to lose its prey. Keenly watching the boys, it suddenly darted forward.

“Look out!” roared Dana, as John and Scott instantly dropped back. “If you run, it’ll get you, sure!”

Larcum, Dana, and Lee, however, after the first instruction, drawing back as the lion bounded forward, now shouting at the top of their power, were brandishing their clubs and once more were facing the infuriated animal.

Suddenly the mountain lion leaped upon the body of the fawn, seized it in its powerful grip, flung the carcass upon its shoulders, and then, before the excited boys were fully aware of what was occurring, it turned and, with long bounds, disappeared within the depths of the forest.

“Whew! That was a close call!” ejaculated Dana. “I’m glad it’s gone. I don’t think I ever heard or saw a more simon-pure fool-thing in my life,” he added, as he turned to Larcum.

“You’re young yet,” remarked Larcum dryly.

“Those mountain lions are savage creatures,” continued Dana. “It isn’t often they’ll attack a man unless they’re cornered or are unusually hungry—but if they do—then you want to look out.”

“Well, this fellow didn’t, so I didn’t have to look out.”

“If you’d been alone, it would have got you.”

“I guess it would have had all it wanted then,” laughed Larcum.

“Larc,” said John soberly, “you might have made a serious trouble for us all. It was bad enough to drop me into the Merced when I couldn’t swim a stroke, but to have us clawed up by a mountain lion is worse. You had no right to do it.”

“I didn’t ask you to lend a hand,” retorted Larcum. “I wasn’t going to stand by and let that creature tear that poor little fawn into pieces and not do a thing, was I?”

“And yet, if you had had a gun and there hadn’t been any law against using it, what would you yourself have done when you saw those fine deer?” asked John.

“ Probably I’d have drawn a bead on one of them.”

“ There isn’t the slightest doubt of what you’d have done, Larc. Now, after all, what did the mountain lion do more than you would have done if you’d been allowed to do just what you wanted? ”

“ All I can say is that the sly, treacherous old villain got what he deserved. At least I let him have one in the jaw.”

“ The beast was made to catch or hunt deer, wasn’t it? ”

“ Oh, there you go with your fine-spun, hair-splitting Boston theories. You draw everything too fine, Jack. Even if what you say is true, it’s just as true, isn’t it, that the rock in my hand was made to smash the rascal’s head with? ”

“ Come on! We’ll be meeting a whole regiment of mountain lions or bears if we stay here talking over nothing any longer,” said Scott impatiently. “ For my part I’m sorry the lion got the fawn, and I’m not a bit sorry the beast will have the toothache for a day or two. Come on! ”

Briskly the boys resumed their journey, although the effect of their recent encounter was

not entirely gone. The roadway led through the midst of the towering trees—cedars, firs, sugar pines—lifting their lofty tops so high that it hardly seemed possible that the big trees, which they soon were expecting to see, could be any larger than the giants among which the boys were now passing. When such comments were made, Dana smiled and simply said, “Wait.”

“I’d like to take one of these great cones home with me,” said John, pointing, as he spoke, to the huge cones, some of them twenty inches in length, which strewed the ground on either side of the road.

“What would you do with it?” laughed Scott.

“Take it home for a memento or curiosity. I’d hang it upside down in my room, plant seeds in it, and watch them grow.”

“No, you wouldn’t! You’d have your mother after you for adding to the dust-collecting truck and junk you’ve got in your room now. You ought to see Jack’s room!” Larcum added, with a laugh. “He’s got a lot of old Colonial money framed——”

“Nothing wrong about that, is there, Larc?” interrupted John.

“No, nothing wrong, but it shows a queer taste. Now, if you had some greenbacks or yellowbacks framed, that would be different.”

“They’re made to use, not to frame.”

“Then he’s got some old letters of his great-grandfather’s,” continued Larcum. “Important letters, too—about some bills for Jamaica rum he wanted to collect. He’s got an old horse-pistol his great-uncle carried at Bunker Hill or somewhere else——”

“You don’t understand what it means to have ancestors, Larc. Out where you live everybody keeps mighty quiet about his grandfather——”

“No more quiet than his grandfather keeps,” asserted Larcum dryly. “I tell you, in a Republic like ours, what’s the use in a man trying to bolster himself up by telling what a big man his great-grandfather was? I believe in every tub standing on its own bottom.”

“That was why the T. G. & P. R. R. took you into their offices, wasn’t it, Larc?” asked John demurely. “Well, I’m glad I’m not ashamed and don’t have to make any apology for the men whose names I bear.”

“That’s all right, but what would they have

to say about it if they knew? Ever think of that, Jack?" laughed Larcum.

"Yes, I have. It's a great responsibility to have to live up to a name."

"Depends on the name. Now, if you knew what George Washington really thought about John Adams, how do you think you'd feel? From what I hear I understand that the afore-said John Adams didn't think the above-mentioned George Washington measured up to his job. Any traditions of that kind in your family, Jack?"

"I'll tell you——" began John quickly.

"No, you won't! You'll stop right in your tracks and have a look at this great valley. Did you ever see anything like that? We must be three thousand feet above it. You can't see a sign of a human habitation anywhere. We can look straight down—just see how close to the edge the road runs. The trees down there look like a sea. And then look across yonder to the opposite side! See all these bare, bleak, old mountains! They stand for something, let me tell you! The high Sierras are as barren and wild as Dante's Inferno. With such a sight in one's own country, what do you suppose makes so many Americans think they must

go to the Alps if they want to see real mountains? There isn't anything in Switzerland finer than this."

The enthusiasm of the young giant was contagious, and for a brief time all five boys stood silently looking upon the majestic scene spread out before them. In a brief time the journey was resumed at Dana's eager request, for he was fearful the party would not arrive before sunset at the Wawona Hotel, whither they were bound.

Soon after the boys started, they saw a rough roadway which joined the one along which they were walking. "There's somebody coming," said Dana. "From the sounds I think it's a man on horseback."

The boy's suspicion was verified a moment later when a rider was seen approaching. As Larcum looked keenly at the man, he instantly recognized him as the agent of the railroad whom he had last seen on the trail on Cloud's Rest.

CHAPTER XXIX

WAWONA

INSTANTLY alert, Larcum looked eagerly at the approaching man, confident that he would stop to explain the results of his researches and that now he would learn definitely just what the outcome of the search for the supposed train-robbers had been. To Larcum's surprise the man, as he passed, simply responded to the respectful salutations of the boys and did not stop. So great was Larcum's surprise that for a moment he was convinced that the man had failed to recognize him.

Dropping back behind his companions, Larcum turned and hailed the man when the latter had entered the road that led to the valley.

"Wait a minute!" the young traveler called.

The man halted and waited for the young traveler to approach. "What is it?" he inquired impatiently.

"Did you find the reporter? Was that

really his body in the cañon? Have you had any word?" inquired Larcum, in his excitement.

"I haven't any time to waste here."

"Don't waste any on my account," said Larcum tartly. "You didn't seem to feel just that way about it the other day when you asked me to take the trail with you up Cloud's Rest." The young giant was angry at what he looked upon as not a full recognition of the part he had taken in the search. Who was it that had first become suspicious of the young reporter? Who had watched him and his companion? Who had sent word to the railway people? If it had not been for his message, this man would not now be near the Yosemite. No, sir, Larcum assured himself. It was all very well to take everything he offered to give, but it was not right to treat him now as if he had no knowledge of the purpose of the man in following the trail. There was justice in everything.

Peering shrewdly at the chagrined boy, the man smiled slightly as he said, "I thought I could trust you."

"You can. Have you any reason to think you can't?"

“ I don't look upon what you are doing now as a very shrewd piece of work, do you? ”

“ What am I doing? ”

“ Leaving your friends and trying to talk to me. Of course they will want to know all about what is said. You have called their attention definitely to me, otherwise I would have passed without any special observation. You've made a mistake. Good-afternoon.” The man turned abruptly and rode away, leaving Larcum staring blankly after him and not a little put out by the sharp words he had just heard. Slowly walking back to the place where his friends were waiting for him, the young giant's face was a study as he approached.

“ Who was that man, Larc? ” asked John.

“ I don't know,” replied Larcum gruffly.

“ You were talking together as if each of you thought the other man was his long-lost brother,” said Lee laughingly.

“ Were we? ”

“ You certainly were, sir. We didn't know but that you had found the man that held up our train—the one you've been looking for ever since we left San Francisco.”

“ Well, he didn't do it. He wasn't the man.”

“ Look here, Jack! ” broke in Scott, who had

been quietly watchful of Larcum's face during the interview and was convinced by what he said that his friend had more ground for his mood than his companions understood. "I thought you were the chap that wanted to walk and said the way from where we got out of the coach ran down hill all the way to Wawona?"

"That's what the driver said," replied John meekly.

"Well, that driver was not a man of truth and veracity. We're climbing again and I don't see any change in the prospect ahead. Wawona must be up near the moon somewhere, I guess. At any rate we've been going up, up, up about all the time since we left the Bridal Veil Fall."

"Nobody tells the truth in these parts. You can't depend on any one," growled Larcum.

"Yes, even the dead lie," said John soberly.

"It isn't the dead—it's the living. Here lie the dead and here the living lie," said Scott, in sepulchral tones.

"Correct," said Larcum, laughing for the first time since he had rejoined his comrades. "But it's no dream that we're climbing some more."

“ Well, let’s get all the good we can out of it, anyway,” said John lightly. “ I’m not an athlete, but you haven’t heard me whine yet. I don’t believe that you’re aware of the fact that you’re more delicate than the man from Boston——”

“ Come on, fellows! ” broke in Lee. “ We’ve heard enough to help us out. We’ve got to go ahead, anyway, so come on. We’ll be losing time and won’t get into Wawona before midnight if we stop here to argue any longer.”

Lee’s advice was heeded, and the five boys pushed steadily forward. The climb in places was steep and the summer sun was warm, but no further complaints were heard. At times the boys stopped to gaze at the vista which, through the trees, could be seen far below them. The journey each time was soon resumed, and when a few miles had been covered the climb ended and the descent really began.

On the cliff where the winding road had been made on the very border of the mountain, the sight of the immense valley, many hundreds of feet below them, held the silent attention of every one when the party stopped. Miles across the beautiful and yet lonely and wild stretch of

wooded valley the towering mountains reared themselves on the opposite side. And, in the midst of the marvelous scene, the only human beings to be seen were the five boys, who were peering almost directly down into the far depths of the vast bowl.

“ I can almost believe what that driver told us the day we first came into the Yosemite,” said Scott.

“ What was that? ” asked Lee.

“ That it wouldn't hurt a man to fall off here—he'd starve to death before he ever struck bottom. Don't you remember? ”

The boys laughed as they turned away, and for a time ran down the steep road. Multitudes of gray squirrels darted across the way, or ran chattering about in the midst of the towering trees. The ground was strewn with the immense cones of the sugar pines; the sunlight, as it found an occasional entrance through the foliage, danced and glistened on the thick carpet of needles and cones; an occasional cry of a bird from the depths of the forest provided variety, but the ever-present thought of the young travelers was of the tremendous heights of the bleak Sierras and of the corresponding depth of the intervening valleys.

Not a person was met as the journey continued. The loneliness of the region of itself was so intense that not one of the boys was giving voice to his feeling of satisfaction that his friends were with him. The recollection of the attack on the mountain lion made every one watchful, though no one referred to the feeling in his heart.

At last the sun sank below the great hills, and the approach of night was at hand. "Look here, Jack, you got us into this tramp. Do you know, whether or not this road really goes anywhere?" inquired Lee.

"It does not," replied John promptly.

"It doesn't? Then what are we doing here?"

"We're the ones that 'go.' The road doesn't move."

"Thank you. I really never thought of that before! That is quite true, isn't it, you know! Quite remarkable! Most extraordinary! There isn't anything like having a trained mind, is there?"

"I didn't make the suggestion," retorted John.

"True! True! Jack, when do we arrive at Wawona?"

“ Very soon, now.”

“ Sure? ”

“ You know as much about it as I do. You heard our driver say we would have to walk about eight miles.”

“ And you don't think we've covered that yet? ”

“ Eight miles always seems long the first time you go over it.”

“ Come on, let's run! ” suggested Larcum.

Wearied as the boys were from their tiresome tramp, they all responded to the call and, with wild shouts that were thrown back from the sides of the mountains, they plunged forward down the steep roadway. Once they stopped when Larcum insisted upon rolling a huge stone down into the depths of the valley.

“ There isn't any danger of its hurting anybody,” he explained. “ There isn't anybody there. Listen to that, will you? ” he shouted, as the sounds of falling branches from the pathway of the boulder greeted their ears. “ Jack,” he said quickly, “ that stone made a sound, didn't it? ”

“ Of course it did.”

“ Well, suppose the early spring rains had

washed that same stone loose and it had gone bounding down the side of the mountain in exactly the same course it went just now, would that have made a sound then? ”

“ Not unless there was somebody here to hear it. ”

“ Get out! You mustn't talk that way, Jackie. Don't you know what happens to little boys when they tell stories? ”

“ That was not a story—it was the truth. ”

“ Quit, Larc! We're almost there, ” suggested Scott. “ What do you want to stir up Jack for? You did that on purpose. ”

“ Did what? ”

“ Asked him that question. ”

“ Well, that's what the book says, anyway, ” retorted John.

“ I don't want the book—I want *you!* ” roared Larcum, as he started in swift pursuit of the fleeing John.

“ Hi, there! ” called Scott. “ You'll lose your way in the dark! Come back here and we'll keep together! We're almost in Wawona. ”

The arrival at the place they were seeking was not yet, however, as the boys soon discovered. The stars appeared, the darkness deep-

ened, and still the winding road led downward through the gloom of the great forest.

There were occasional strange sounds in the midst of the oppressive silence, and the watchfulness increased. Conversation had long since ceased, and even the strongest of the party were feeling the effect of the long walk. The road became steeper, and, as there was no moon, the necessity of constant care not to step outside the dim roadway became more marked. Larcum preceded the party, keeping to one side of the road, while Dana acted as special watchman on the opposite side.

“ We’re a good two hours behind the coach,” suggested Scott at last, his voice betraying his weariness as he spoke.

“ Never mind! ” called Larcum. “ We’re in for it and there’s only one way out. No use in crying now.”

“ Hey! ” suddenly shouted Lee. “ Look yonder, off to the right. I can see a light over there among the trees. Is it Wawona? ”

“ It’s a light—yes, and there’s another,” said Dana, as the boys stopped to watch the glow far in advance of them. “ From the look of it I don’t believe it’s more than five miles away.”

“Five miles! What are you talking about?” demanded John. “That light can’t be more than half- or three-quarters of a mile from this place.”

“You forget the magnificent distances out here in the West. Don’t you remember the man who came for his first visit and how often he had been told how far away the mountains really were that looked to be so near, and he had had the tale repeated so many times that it became an old, old story, and, when he came at last to a little brook that he could step across, that he sat down and began to take off his shoes and stockings and——” began Dana.

“Oh, yes!” broke in Larcum. “He was going to take no chances. He was wise now and going to swim the wide river, or be prepared to, anyway. Oh, yes; we’ve heard that story about every hour since we first came inside the borders of California. Don’t inflict it upon us some more——”

“I won’t,” laughed Dana. “Come on! The road veers to the right pretty soon and we’ll have to cross the bridge. We may not get any dinner, but we’ll be in time for breakfast. What time is it, anyway?”

“Time we were in Wawona!” exclaimed Scott.

With spirits restored now that the end of the journey could be seen, the boys all began to run. Down the steep road, across the bridge they turned, and, within a few minutes, they saw the lights of the hotel before them.

CHAPTER XXX

JOHN'S BEAR

WEARIED and dusty from their long and tiresome tramp, still all the boys were ready within a brief time for the special dinner, which was speedily prepared and served. When later they stepped out upon the piazza their spirits were greatly revived, and the sound of the splashing water in the fountain in front of the hotel, the dim outlines of the surrounding mountains, as well as the cool and bracing air of the summer evening, were all matters of keen interest and enjoyment.

“ Well,” said Larcum, when the boys were seated, “ we have had one experience anyway to-day that doesn't come to every traveler in the Yosemite.”

“ You mean the fight with that mountain lion, don't you? ” asked Lee.

“ I do,” replied Larcum fervently. “ I hope we never shall see another.”

“ Not if you are along with us,” said John.

“Larc,” he added, turning to his huge friend, “what you need is training—education. No one who had had the slightest contact with the things that make for culture would ever think of going up alone against a mountain lion as you did.”

“He wouldn’t? He wouldn’t?” demanded Larcum promptly. “Well, that’s right; probably he wouldn’t, if he hadn’t any thought for anything besides codfish and Bunker Hill and Plymouth Rock. You’ve got clear beyond that yourself, I’ll admit; but I can’t stand by and see a pretty little fawn chewed up by a great cat like that beast! No, sir! I feel the way your ancestors did when they shouldered their guns and started for Concord and Lexington. I’m glad I’m ready to fight to-day for the wrongs of the world.”

“Yes, some people fight for the wrong and some for the right,” said John demurely.

“And some people think that whatever they fight for must be right, because they happen to be the ones that are doing the fighting.”

“I’m not sorry we saw a real mountain lion,” said Lee, “but I’m glad Larc happened to be with me at the time. If I’d been alone,

I'm afraid that sneaking cat would have mistaken me for a bone and made off with me."

"It did look a bit savage, didn't it?" said Scott. "From the stories I have read in the papers, and from the delightful tales poured into my boyish, credulous ears, I had somehow obtained the impression that the mountain lion was far more savage than the leopard or the lion of the desert."

"I don't want to be in a corner alone with one," said Lee. "I sha'n't forget very soon the way this fellow's ears were flattened against his head, his wide-open smile, and the appearance of the few teeth he possessed. That was a fool thing for Larc to do, to start alone against the beast. He might have been torn into a thousand pieces."

"Make it twelve hundred or eleven-fifty, and I'll agree," said Larcum dryly.

"But they do attack men sometimes," asserted Dana.

"That driver we had coming over says they don't unless they're cornered or ravenously hungry," said John.

"I guess that was one of his tales for travelers," laughed Dana.

"Well, that's what he said, anyway," said

John persistently. "He told me that he knew of a case where a pair of those lions kept a man—a miner I guess he was, or a trapper, I forget which—in his cabin for a week. They'd crawl up on the roof of his hut and gnaw and claw away at the boards, trying to get in. They even started to come down his chimney."

"I haven't any doubt about it," joined in Dana. "I knew a man that was out prospecting one time and ran across a huge mountain lion—he said it was 'immense, the biggest he ever saw.' The miner shot and missed, and then the lion sprang for him. The miner used his gun as a club, and finally beat off the varmint for a little while; but it came back in a few minutes. The miner had bent his gun-barrel when he had struck at the lion, and his weapon was in the form of a crescent when he had time to draw a long breath."

"Go on with that tale!" said Larcum promptly.

"Well, the miner finally loaded up his gun with buckshot just before the savage monster came back at him. He dodged behind a tree, and then there was a race—the lion chasing the man around and around the stump. They made good time, both of them, but the miner soon

found out that he wasn't making very good time, compared with his pursuer. He knew he couldn't keep up the pace much longer."

"What did he do?" inquired John innocently.

"He finally took his gun—you know, I told you he'd bent the barrel until it was almost double—and, shoving it around the bark of the tree in front of him, he found it just reached the tail of the terrible lion. The miner then pulled the trigger——"

"And what happened?" asked John.

"That miner told me that he never was so glad over anything that had ever happened to him in his life as he was that he'd bent his gun until it looked like a barrel-hoop. You see, now it reached right around the tree, and when he pulled the trigger——"

"The gun went off and the buckshot kept going 'round the tree, didn't they?" broke in Scott.

"When he pulled the trigger, as I was saying——" remarked Dana.

"Three times you've told us that remarkable fact," said Lee.

"Well, the miner did it, anyway, and the gun-barrel reached around to the opposite side

of the tree. The charge blew the lion's body all to pieces—that is, it blew all of it clear up to his forelegs. It never hurt them, and it didn't touch the head. The miner told me the expression of surprise on the lion's face—you see, there wasn't much of the beast left, except his face——”

“ And kindly countenance,” suggested Larcum.

“ You wouldn't expect that to be very far from the face, would you? Well, the miner said the look of reproach on the face of that lion has haunted him ever since.”

“ And well it might,” said Larcum soberly. “ Did you ever hear about the long-haired man that met the little boy on the street? ”

“ Many, many a time,” said Dana promptly. “ My grandfather said that story was hanging from the trees when he first came into Oregon.”

“ Hanging beside your grandfather on the same tree? ”

“ No. It was hanging there waiting for him. It had been there ever since DeSoto first discovered the West.”

“ Where does your esteemed grandfather lie now? ” asked Larcum.

“ His grave is in Portland.”

“ There lie the dead and here the living lie,” murmured Larcum.

“ What about the long-haired man and the small boy, Larc? ” asked John.

“ Why, the boy stopped the man and inquired the time. ‘ Five minutes past nine,’ the man told him. ‘ Well,’ said the boy, ‘ at nine-twenty-five get your hair cut.’ ”

“ That was good advice,” said Scott. “ Nothing wrong about that, Larc. If there’s anything I can’t endure, it’s a long-haired man or a short-haired woman.”

“ Go on with that exciting story, Larc! ” ordered Lee. “ I’ve been kept in suspense too long already. What happened? ”

“ The man began to chase the impudent boy and ran, bump! into a big, fat policeman. ‘ What’s wrong?’ said the policeman. ‘ See that boy running yonder?’ said the long-haired one. ‘ Yep,’ replied the policeman, in terse Oregonian. ‘ Well, he told me to get my hair cut at nine-twenty-five.’ The guardian of the peace pulled his watch from his pocket, and looking at it——”

“ The watch or the pocket, Larc? ” broke in John.

“ Looking at his watch, he said to the long-haired one: ‘ Well, what are you running for? It’s only nine-twelve now. You’ve got thirteen minutes yet. You don’t need to be in such a terrible haste.’ ”

“ No policeman in the universe ever used such language! ” declared Scott. “ Besides, what has that to do with Dana’s story of the miner with the bent gun? I don’t see the connection.”

“ There isn’t any connection,” said Larcum soberly. “ That’s the joke.”

“ About like the bears we saw to-day,” said Scott solemnly.

“ But we didn’t see any bears,” suggested John.

“ Didn’t ‘ see any bears ’? ” responded Dana. “ Why, there are lots of them.”

“ Where? ”

“ All around us. I’ll show you one to-morrow morning before breakfast,” said Dana promptly.

“ I’m not going out on a tramp to-morrow morning before breakfast. I’ve had enough to-day to last me for some time,” said John.

“ You won’t have to go far. What’ll you give me if I can point out a bear to you to-

morrow morning—a big fellow, too, and not more than a hundred yards from this very place where we are sitting now?” demanded Dana eagerly.

“I’ll treat you to a good dinner when we are back in San Francisco.”

“You might as well be preparing your menu, Jack,” laughed Larcum.

“I don’t see why,” retorted Jack. “I haven’t seen any bears or signs of bears.”

“You will,” said Larcum confidently. “You’re too easy, Jack. Clearchus doesn’t help you out when it comes to modern times. You——”

“I’ll chance it,” interrupted John, with a laugh.

“Strange how little some people see, even when their eyes are wide open,” continued Larcum thoughtfully. “Now, here’s Jack; you wouldn’t think he’d ‘rise’ as he did to Dana’s cast. But, then, perhaps that is the way with us all. I’ll tell you what I’ll do, fellows,” he added quickly. “Jack has promised to set us all up a good dinner——”

“Nay. I promised Dana; but he’ll have to show me the bear first.”

“All the same,” assented Larcum, “the

dinner is for us all. Now, I'll give another one if Dana can tell whether all the figures on the face of his watch are Arabic or Roman. A fellow looks at his watch almost every quarter hour, but I don't know of ten men among my acquaintances who could say whether the 'six,' for example, is Arabic or Roman."

"I can," assented Dana confidently, as he pulled his watch from his pocket. "You don't catch me that way. Two good dinners are awaiting me upon my arrival at San Francisco."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Larcum, as he arose. "Let's get this fixed right before we go on any farther. You'll accept my offer, will you?"

"Yes; and with thanks," laughed Dana.

"You are sure, are you, that you can say now, without looking at your watch, whether the 'six' on its face is just a plain Arabic six, or is a V and one I, are you?"

"I am."

"Well, which is it?"

"It's Roman—a 'V' and an 'I.'"

"Come on into the hall and prove it."

Laughingly the boys all arose and went into the hotel. Standing under the light they

crowded about Dana, who confidently drew out his watch and opened it. An expression of blank amazement swept over his countenance as he gazed at the familiar timepiece.

“ I never would have believed it! ” he exclaimed. “ Is it just the same with every one of your watches? ” he demanded of his friends.

In response every boy opened his watch and then laughed, for they were all alike in the designation of the sixth hour of the day.

“ I’ve looked at my watch, as Larc says, probably once every fifteen minutes in the day-time since my father gave it to me, four years ago, ” said Scott, “ and I never once noticed what Larc has just brought to my attention. ”

“ All of which shows how much we look and how little we see, ” said Larcum. “ Now, Dana, you and Jack are quits, aren’t you? ”

“ I am, ” laughed Dana.

“ But I’m not, ” spoke up John positively. “ I want to see that bear. ”

“ Your blood be upon your own head, then, ” retorted Larcum. “ I’m for bed. ”

In the morning, when Larcum came down to the piazza and joined Scott and Lee, who were awaiting him, they all saw John and Dana coming up the pathway from the direction of a

deep ravine not far from the hotel. "Hello, Jack!" called Larcum. "What do you think of the bear Dana showed you?"

"It's a beauty and a bouncer," answered John.

"Did you really see one?" asked Lee, interested at once.

"I certainly did."

"Where is it?"

"Just over there in a big pen. It's a huge old Alaskan bear—Dana knew all the time it was here."

"Well, you're wiser than you were, Jack," laughed Larcum; "but you'll bite just as well the very next time. Come on in for breakfast. I've arranged for Scott, Lee, and Jack to have seats in the coach, which will start for the Big Trees in an hour. Dana and I are going on horseback. The coach will carry luncheon for us; but our breakfast—well, we'll have to eat that and carry it, too; come on in, I'm hungry."

CHAPTER XXXI

AMONG THE BIG TREES

THE sun was shining, and the thick dust of the road was heavy when, later in the morning, the boys started for the grove of Big Trees. Larcum and Dana were mounted on sturdy horses, and rode in advance of the coach, in which the other members of the party were seated.

“ How far do we go this morning? ” inquired John of the driver.

“ About eight miles.”

“ Yosemite miles? ” laughed Lee.

“ Yes; but they are not longer than any other kind, are they? ”

“ They seem to be,” replied Lee. “ Perhaps it’s because we’re going up so much of the time. Is our ride to-day up-hill? ”

“ Most of the way.”

“ Going or coming? ”

“ Both, Lee,” spoke up Scott. “ That’s the strange part of travel in the Yosemite. You

naturally think, after you have been riding up, up, up, that the road afterward will go down. But when you come back you find you're still climbing hills just the same."

"Not quite so bad as that," said the driver soberly. "It's up and down, no matter which way you go. Just depends on which road you take. I've seen all kinds of weather here, too, in one day: rain, snow, hail, sleet, sunshine—all come along the same day."

"Hi, there!" suddenly shouted Scott to the boys on horseback. "You're stirring up such a cloud of dust we can't see the driver! Go ahead or else drop back behind us."

"Every mortal is required to eat his regulation peck of dirt!" retorted Larcum.

"We don't mind a little thing like a peck!" shouted Scott. "We don't mind eating it, either; but we don't want to soak it in, breathe it in, rub it in. Go ahead, Larc! Be a good little boy."

"I'm afraid I'll lose my way."

"Stop when you come to a crossroad and wait for us," suggested the driver.

Laughingly the two horsemen rode ahead, and soon were lost to sight. The coach, lighter

than the one in which the ride had been made from the Sentinel Hotel, swayed as the wheels struck the rougher places in the road; but, freed from the cloud of dust, the boys did not complain. For the greater part of the journey the ride was still through forests, though the trees were not as large as the giant sugar pines that had been passed the preceding day. The absence of song birds, too, was noticeable; but the driver, in response to John's questions, explained that almost every species of eagle known in America was to be found on the sides of the mountains.

“ I'd like to see one of the big golden eagles,” said John.

“ What about the bald head? That's our national emblem, isn't it? ” asked Scott.

“ Yes; but I've seen a good many of them—but I never saw a golden eagle.”

“ When you are in New York some time, I'll show you one.”

“ New York! You will? Where, I'd like to know? ”

“ Bronx Park.”

“ Jack, you certainly are too innocent ever to travel alone,” laughed Lee.

“ Did you hear about Jack's turning Larc's

music for him the other evening at the hotel? ” asked Scott, laughing as he spoke.

“ No. What about it? ”

“ Well, Larc seated himself at the piano, placed some sheets of music before him, and began to play. The wind rattled the sheets, and Larc kept looking around at us, as if he was begging some one of us to come to his aid and hold and turn the music for him. We were too wise to respond, for we knew perfectly well that Larc was up to one of his tricks. Jack, here, stood it as long as he could, and then he stalked majestically across the room, giving us a glance of withering scorn for our failure to see what old Larc wanted in his time of dire need, and took his stand right beside the player and turned the leaves whenever Larc nodded.”

“ I don’t see anything very wrong in that,” said Lee.

“ There wasn’t.”

“ Then what was the joke? I don’t see it yet.”

“ Larc wasn’t playing from notes at all, and the music in front of him wasn’t what he was playing, either. We knew he was just trying to get some one of us to bite, that was all.”

“ Pity that John, with all his knowledge of

Clearchus, as Larc says, never learned music as he ought. It would have saved him that time, anyway," laughed Lee.

"It is too bad," acknowledged John. "Honestly I don't believe I could tell the difference between 'Yankee Doodle' and 'Old Hundred,' except for the fact that one is fast and the other is slow."

"And from Boston, too!" sighed Scott.

"Yes, from Boston, too," said John. "Everything has been done for me, but it didn't seem to help me. Music was left out of my constitution. But then there's one salvation, after all."

"What's that?"

"Why, music is the lowest of the arts. It appeals to the emotions, you know. What are you fellows laughing at?" he demanded blankly, as a shout arose from his companions.

"That's the best yet!" shouted Scott. "What you said, Jack, was bad enough; but your question beats the world."

"I don't see," persisted John.

"And you never will."

"What is the joke?" demanded John, as Scott and Lee broke into a renewed shout. "If it's so funny, explain it to me."

“No use. We can’t explain,” said Scott.

A ride of three hours through the woods, without a human being having been seen on the way, or the sight of a human habitation appearing, at last brought the party to the border of the grove they were seeking. An occasional tree of mammoth proportions had been passed, but, in response to the queries of the boys as to whether or not “this was one of the Big Trees,” the driver had smiled, merely bidding his impatient young passengers to “wait.”

“Who discovered the Big Trees, anyway?” asked John of their driver.

“A young fellow named Hogg passed through the grove away back in July or August, 1855. He didn’t make any real examination, though he told Galen Clark about what he’d seen. The next year—that was in 1856—Galen Clark and a man named Milton set out to find if there was really anything in what the young fellow had reported.”

“They found the report true, did they?” inquired John.

“They surely did. Ever since that time there’s been a steady stream of people here to see the trees. We pass the marker that shows

just where Galen Clark stood when he first saw them.”

“Why is the grove called the ‘Mariposa Grove?’” asked Lee.

“Because it’s in Mariposa County. Yonder is the Fallen Monarch. We’ll stop here a few minutes and let you see it.”

Leaping out of the coach the boys joined Larcum and Dana, who were already there and standing on the trunk of the gigantic tree, which had fallen no one knows how many years before.

“Count your steps as you come up the ladder!” called Larcum to his friends, as they turned to join the two boys, who were standing on the trunk.

“Fourteen steps!” shouted Lee, as he gained the place. “It’s a bit of a sapling, isn’t it!”

“Only thirty-six feet in diameter,” responded Larcum; “that is, if you take in those roots.”

“This is the tree of which you often see pictures,” explained Dana. “You know there’s a picture of a coach and four horses standing right on the trunk where we are now.”

“ They couldn’t drive up here,” said John.

“ No; I don’t suppose they could,” assented Dana; “ but they could lead the horses up an inclined platform and put the coach together again up here. Just think of a tree so big that four horses and a coach can stand right on the trunk.”

“ How high are most of the trees? ” inquired Scott.

“ Oh, they vary from two hundred and thirty to three hundred and sixteen feet in height,” replied the driver.

“ What? ”

“ It’s a fact! ”

“ How many of these Big Trees are there? ”

“ About six hundred up here.”

“ Why doesn’t some one cut them down? ”

“ It wouldn’t be a very healthy occupation for any one,” laughed Dana. “ The state has reserved about four square miles here, and no lumberman dares to touch a tree with his ax or saw. There are really two groves, you know—the lower, where we are, and the upper. Some of these trees would be a good deal larger than they are if they hadn’t been damaged.”

“ How were they damaged? ”

“ Fire.”

“ Who would set fire to such trees? ”

“ Probably no one, though some say the Indians did. Very likely lightning has done the greatest damage. You’ll see some trees on which the bark has been burned in a foot. Come on, boys, get into the coach; we’ve a lot more to see before we’re done.”

A brief ride brought the party to the “ Grizzly Giant,” an immense tree whose appearance at once suggested the source of its name. Once more the boys leaped to the ground, and stood about the base of the oldest tree, as well as the largest tree in all the world. For a moment no one spoke, the silence being scarcely less impressive than the gnarled and “ grizzly ” appearance of the huge tree, which students of botany declare to be at least eight thousand years old.

“ Look up there at that limb—the first one you can see,” suggested Dana. “ How far do you think that is from the ground? ”

“ How far is it? ” asked Lee.

“ It’s a hundred feet. Just think of a tree whose lowest branch, above the ground, is ten feet more than the distance from the home plate to first base! ”

“ Whew! ” exclaimed Scott. “ It takes a

fellow's breath away! How many steps around the base is it?"

"Try it and see," suggested Dana laughingly.

"Forty-seven paces around the trunk!" shouted Scott, as he carefully paced the distance.

"It is just thirty-four feet in diameter," said John, reading aloud from a placard on the trunk of the Grizzly Giant. "That lowest branch is about the height of Larc in its diameter. It's six and a half feet through it! The tree itself isn't so tall as some in the grove, for it's only two hundred and fifty feet in height."

"That is quite sufficient! Just think of what the old fellow has seen or might have seen. It was here when Clearchus marched his fourteen parasangs," murmured Larcum.

"That's right," laughed John. "It was here when Noah built his ark. It was here when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. This old tree was old enough to die of old age when the Greeks fought at Salonica and Thermopylæ. It was old when Job was a baby. It was right here when Cain slew Abel, and when Abraham——"

“ Oh, tell us something new! ” broke in Larcum. “ Be up to date once in your life! ”

“ I will, ” laughed John, taking a pencil and paper from his pocket as he spoke.

“ This placard says there are a million feet of timber in this one tree. Do you realize that that is enough to inclose the Flatiron Building in New York City? Why, fellows, that’s enough lumber to cover the *Mauretania* from stem to stern—enough to box it all in! ”

“ And yet there are people who call themselves Americans who think they’ve got to go to Europe to see old things! ” snorted Larcum.

“ Never mind, Larc! You don’t have to! ” suggested Scott.

“ You’re right, I don’t! America is good enough for me. See your own country before you go traveling in other lands and leaving your good money for J. Bull or Ach Hein to spend instead of letting their own country have it! I spell my country with a capital ‘ A. ’ ”

A summons from the driver caused the boys to resume their seats, and the drive was continued. The giant trees, upon many of which the name of some state or city could be seen, were on every side. Towering high in the air, the impressiveness of the grove through which

the boys were passing increased, until at last they arrived at their destination.

Here they found a log hut, with two men in attendance. Outside, there were several tables, on which the luncheon, which had been brought, was to be served. In front of the cabin were many of the Big Trees, each of which had been named for some famous American general. Not far away was a huge tree, in the interior of which was a stable for the horses.

“What are you doing, Jack?” asked Larcum, as he and Scott found their friend stretched on his back, gazing up through the tree-tops.

“I’m getting the best impression,” said John quietly. “This is the way Roosevelt took to get the true perspective. Better try it, fellows.”

Instantly the two boys stretched themselves beside John, and, as they too looked up, for a time they were all silent. The background of fleecy, floating clouds, the mammoth trunks of the trees, the lofty branches, many of which were themselves larger than “big trees” the boys had known in the East, were all parts of a vision which none of them ever forgot.

The spell, however, was broken when Lee approached and gazed in astonishment at his prostrate companions. "What are you looking at?" he demanded.

"We're trying to find out how much space there is between the tops of these trees and the sky," said Larcum.

"If you'll turn your eyes earthward a minute, you'll see an old friend of yours."

"Who?" exclaimed Larcum, sitting instantly erect.

"That reporter we first saw in San Francisco. He's standing there in the cabin door."

CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSION

LEAVING his friends, Larcum ran swiftly to the cabin, where he was greeted by the reporter. The boys were all intently watching the actions of the two young men, although Scott was the most interested of all. He arose as if he was about to go to Larcum, but, after he saw his friend start with the reporter for another part of the grove, he concluded that his company was not desired, and accordingly resumed his seat upon the ground.

“What’s the matter with Larc, anyway?” said Lee, as his friend disappeared from sight. “He acts as if he had lost his wits every time that reporter man appears on the horizon.”

“You can leave Larc to look after himself,” said Scott simply.

“Yea, verily,” joined in John. “Little Larkie is all right. He was telling me this morning how he was taught by his mother to depend upon himself.”

“How was that?” inquired Lee.

“She used to turn the hose on him,” said John.

“What do you mean?”

“Why, when he was a little chap—one doesn’t often think that Larc ever could have been small—he was quite likely to draw one of his stockings on wrong side out.”

“And that’s how she came to turn the hose on him?” laughed Scott.

“It was.”

“Jack, you certainly are improving!” said Lee. “It won’t be long, if you keep on at this rate, before you’ll be able to see a joke not so very long after all the rest of us have seen it.”

“Thank you. It isn’t that it’s so hard to see a joke; it’s the difficulty of finding any joke in the remarks of certain nameless people. I have ascertained in the course of my numerous journeyings that there are some strangely organized beings that can see a joke where there isn’t any. Do you recall Hamlet’s queries concerning the shape of the cloud——”

“Oh, let the Dane rest! There’s the first call for luncheon and I do not intend to be left out. Come on!” exclaimed Scott, as he hastily

arose and, followed by the three boys, started swiftly for the table, which had been spread in the open, underneath the towering trees.

The driver, with the assistance of one of the men regularly stationed at the cabin, had spread on the boards the food which had been brought from the hotel at Wawona, and the sight of the feast was most tempting to the hungry young travelers.

“Call Larc,” said John, as he slid into a place on the bench in front of the table.

“Call him yourself, please!” retorted Scott. “I’m too busy to whistle.”

Lee, however, was the one who whistled shrilly for the missing member of the party, but, after a half-dozen shrill calls had been made and the missing Larcum failed to reply, he too took a seat on the rude bench and eagerly joined his friends in the repast. “Larc doesn’t know what he’s missing,” he murmured, as he helped himself bountifully to the various viands.

“Then he won’t suffer any,” said John thickly. “If we were to miss our dinner after such a fine start, that would be another matter. A man never misses what he never had.”

“I’ll save something for Larc,” said Lee.

“ Could anything be finer than this? ” he added, with enthusiasm. “ Here we are almost seven thousand feet up in the air! Just taste this air—— ”

“ The chicken is quite satisfying, ” broke in Scott.

“ Just taste this air! ” resumed Lee, ignoring Scott’s remark. “ Just look out among the trees. It’s a real forest we’re in, fellows. This dinner is fit for a king. This water we’re drinking is as pure and cold as nature can provide. We haven’t a care in the world. No mathematics, no classics, no professors, not even a tutor up here, and I don’t believe there’s a book in this grove. All we lack is our whilom and erstwhile, not to say recreant companion, Larcum Brown, of the T. G. & P. Why doesn’t he come? ” Lee added, as he peered into the surrounding forest.

“ He’ll come, all right. Don’t you worry about Larc when there is any eating to be done, ” said John.

“ We’d better see that there is something left for him to eat when he does appear, ” suggested Scott. “ That mountain lion would be gentle compared with what L. Brown will be if we eat up all his luncheon. ”

“ He ought to be able to look out for his own wants,” said John. “ He knew when he went away with that reporter what he was leaving behind him.”

“ We’ll do the best we can for him, anyway,” laughed Scott. “ We’ll tell him what a good luncheon we had, and that may be some comfort.”

“ You’d better not try it,” remarked Lee, with conviction.

“ Meanwhile see how the viands are evaporating,” said John. “ They are like the snowflakes Bryant tells about in his poem, ‘ Lost in the Dark and Silent Lake.’ ”

Silence followed, and, when at last the boys arose from their repast, Scott said soberly: “ I don’t see any reason why Larc should complain. I never felt more at peace with all the world than I do this minute.”

“ You look the part,” laughed John. “ Come on, we’ll go to the cabin. I understand that one of the government forest rangers is there. I’d like to talk to him.”

“ I’d rather hear him talk,” said Lee, as he and his companions followed John back to the cabin.

The ranger was found seated on the piazza,

and, as soon as he heard that the boys were desirous of meeting him, he at once welcomed them, inviting them to be seated in the rustic chairs near him.

“ Yes,” he said, in reply to John’s question, “ I have charge of about twenty square miles of this forest.”

“ Do you have to cover it every day? ”

“ I do cover it at this time of the year. I usually start with my pony early in the morning. Sometimes I stay out two or three days.”

“ And sleep on the mountains? ”

“ Yes. I carry a kit with me.”

“ You must be very lonely.”

“ Oh, I don’t think very much about that. The trees are almost like company. One comes to know them so well they’re like old friends. I suppose one must have a love for them in the first place or he wouldn’t take up this kind of work.”

“ Don’t you ever have any trouble with bears? ”

“ No ‘ trouble,’ ” said the forester, with a smile. “ I’m a bit like the Miller o’ the Dee, ‘ I trouble nobody, no not I, and nobody troubles me.’ ”

“ But you must see a good many bears.”

“ Oh, I do; lots o’ them.”

“ Grizzlies? ”

“ No, not of late years. The grizzlies mostly are gone. I run across plenty of black or brown bears, and there isn’t a day that I don’t find plenty of deer.”

“ Mountain lions, too? ”

“ Yes, I find them occasionally.”

“ Are you afraid of them? ”

“ I haven’t had any trouble yet. They usually slink away when they see a man.”

“ What do you do in your rounds? ”

“ Look out for fire mostly.”

“ Do the forests ever get on fire? ”

The ranger smiled as he said: “ Indeed they do. If these forests weren’t watched, it wouldn’t be very long before there wouldn’t be any need of forest rangers.”

“ How do the fires start? ”

“ Lightning mostly. Sometimes hunters or trappers or tourists are careless, and a fire gets started before you know it.”

“ Have you ever seen a big fire—I mean a big forest on fire? ”

“ Indeed I have—to my sorrow. If you’ll look out across the valley when you go back, you can see a great tract all burned over.”

“ How do you fight it? You can't do much alone, can you? ”

“ Not very much,” said the ranger modestly. “ I usually get help, and the first thing we do is to make a fire line.”

“ What's that? ”

“ Cut down the trees and clear up the brush for a good space directly in the path of the fire. We start another fire in the stuff we've cut—one that we can watch—and then, by the time the main fires gets up to the line, it dies out, because there's only ashes there. There are times though when nothing but a heavy rain will stop a forest fire. We've lost as much timber from the fires as we have from the lumbermen.”

“ What would you do if you should find a man cutting down a tree? ”

“ Arrest him,” said the ranger quietly. “ Thinking of trying it? ”

“ Indeed, we're not,” said John promptly. “ I am as fond of a tree as some people are of a man. I can't bear to harm one.”

“ That's the way everybody ought to feel,” said the ranger warmly. “ Maybe you'd like to come out here and join me for a season.”

“ I'd like to, but I can't do it.”

“ What is it these big trees are called? ” inquired Lee.

“ Sequoia.”

“ Yes, I remember now. What little cones they have. Why, they aren't one-fifth as large as the sugar-pine cones, and the trees themselves are a good deal larger.”

“ That's right. If you would like to, you may take some of the sequoia cones home with you. The seeds are about ready to drop out. Keep the cones in a dry box until you're home, so the seeds won't be lost.”

“ Will they grow? ” asked Scott quickly.

“ To be sure they will. I've sent some to England. Down in Devonshire there are trees less than fifteen years old and seventy feet in height that grew from these seeds.”

“ We'll do it! ” exclaimed Scott eagerly. “ I'll plant some on our lawn. In about eight thousand years people will be coming to New York to see the big trees there.”

“ Don't expect me to come—then.”

“ You tell the age of a tree by the rings in the trunk, don't you? ” asked Lee.

“ Yes. Some of these trees are eight thousand years old.”

“ We saw that statement on the Grizzly Giant.”

“ Well, it’s true. The rings show it.”

“ Here comes Larc!” said Scott, who had been watching for the return of his friend. “ Let’s go and find out what he has been doing.”

“ And tell him what a good luncheon we’ve had,” added John.

After thanking the ranger for his kindness, the boys all called to Larcum as they walked toward the table on which luncheon had been served.

“ What made you so late, Larc?” asked Scott, as he and the other boys seated themselves and began to eat as if they had not already been served. “ What has become of your reporter?”

“ Gone back to San Francisco to claim his five thousand dollars,” replied Larcum glumly, as he instantly began to satisfy his hunger.

“ Gone *where?* ” exclaimed Scott, in astonishment.

“ I told you.”

“ What do you mean by his claiming his five thousand dollars?”

“ Just what I said.”

“ What is it for? ”

“ That was the reward offered for the capture of the men that held up our train, wasn't it? ” said Larcum tartly.

“ Have the train-robbers been found? ” asked John instantly, as greatly excited as were all his companions.

“ They have,” said Larcum dryly.

“ Where? When? Who found them? How did they get them? ” demanded the boys, still more excitedly.

“ Poor little Larkie! ” murmured Scott.

“ You needn't ‘ poor little Larkie ’ me,” said Larcum sharply. “ I didn't have anything to do with it; I only wish I had. I'd like a slice of that reward myself.”

“ You did your best, Larc. No one will blame you,” said Scott soothingly.

Larcum glared angrily at his friend for a moment, and then laughed as he said: “ Scott thought he had a good one on me, because I half-believed the reporter was one of the robbers. Well, he wasn't, and I was fooled. But, you see, I knew he knew something about it, and then he had a chum that I suspected was his confederate. He got on our train at Sacramento, had a talk with the reporter, and then got off the

train at Merced. I thought it was because the reporter told him to and that he was afraid of us. Then, when they acted as they did in the Yosemite, I thought I'd surely run them down. And the worst of it all was that I was dead certain when I traced the fellow on the trail up Cloud's Rest and found he'd left his horse to find its way back alone, and had made up a dummy to look like a man that had fallen into the cañon. Oh! I'll tell you about that," he added, as his friends interrupted him.

"Well, I'd sent word to the officials in San Francisco that I'd found traces of the robbers," continued Larcum; "but, if you would believe it, this reporter chap was in close touch with them all the time. The sheriff of the county, with a posse, was scouring the valley, for the men had come here——"

"The papers said they were in a half-dozen different places," broke in Lee.

"Just a 'blind,' that's all. They were here, and the men knew it and were after them——"

"What was the 'dummy' for?" asked Scott.

"Just another blind, that's all. They

wanted the train-robbers to hear that a dead man had been found who was suspected of being one of the robbers. You see, it wasn't possible to get at the body—I mean the 'dummy'—and the report got out as I said. But yesterday afternoon the two men were run to cover."

"Where?" inquired Scott.

"In a cave called Robbers' Roost—we passed it on our way over to Wawona. It seems some time ago some men held up a coach here and then hid for days in that cave—that's the way it got its name."

"So these fellows hid in the same place, did they?" said Lee.

"Yes, and it was suspected that they'd try to hold up a coach, too. But they didn't get a chance. They're in San Francisco or Fresno by this time."

"Did they show fight when they were taken?" asked Scott.

"They didn't have a chance—the posse made a rush and it was all over before they could do a thing."

"And the reporter gets the reward, does he?" said John.

"Yes, he and his companion. They over-

heard something when they went to write up the account of the hold-up that made them suspect the robbers would come here. And they did."

"Larc, if you had kept on with Clearchus and his parasangs, you wouldn't have been fooled so easily," laughed John. "It takes a trained mind——"

"Trained nothing!" broke in Larcum. "I know the difference between a bill of lading and a stump speech. Do you, Jack?"

"I know something better than that."

"What?"

"I know we've had a fine time out here. We have only three days more. What are we going to do with them?"

"Go up to Signal Peak for one thing," said Dana. "That's almost eight thousand feet high and you can get a view of the San Joachin Valley you'll never forget. Why, man, that San Joachin Valley is two hundred miles long and thirty miles wide! And such crops you never heard of! Grain, figs, oranges, raisins, grapes——"

"Fine," said Scott softly. "Anything more to be seen?"

"Yes, you mustn't go back East without

having seen the Chilhualna Fall—it's a cascade two thousand feet long and only about two miles from the Wawona Hotel."

"Isn't there something else?" laughed Lee.

"Yes, there is," replied Dana promptly. "There's something for every day if you stay a year. But, as you have only three days, I guess the California State Fish Hatchery will be the most interesting."

"I want to tell you, fellows, that this trip of ours to the Yosemite Valley is the finest thing we ever had!" said Scott. "There isn't anything like it in all the world. I'm proud that it is in my country. I'm proud I'm an American——"

"We'll take it for granted, Scott, that you're sufficiently proud," broke in John. "Words can't express it. What is the best thing you've seen on this trip?"

"Yosemite Falls," answered Scott promptly.

"I think I'd say El Capitan or the Sentinel," said Lee.

"You'll remember the big trees," suggested Dana. "Just think of that one tree, the California, in which a road has been cut right through the trunk. Why, our coach and all

four of the horses were inside the tree in a straight line and at the same time."

"Larc thinks catching train-robbers is the one thing he'll remember longest," said Scott, with a laugh.

"Let Larc speak for himself," suggested John.

"I'd say the Yosemite Valley as a whole—including this Mariposa Grove of Big Trees," said Larcum quietly. "I can't tear things apart the way you can. It's like thinking of my mother—it isn't the color of her eyes or the shape of her hand. It's everything about her when I think of her."

"That's right! Larc has said it for us. The whole is equal to the sum of all its parts," said John.

"Who said that?" demanded Larcum. "That isn't original with you, Jack Field! I've heard that somewhere before."

"Here's the call for the coach and the horses!" said Scott. "That's something you never heard before, anyway. Hold on," added Scott. "Let's give the college yell before we go. One—two—three——"

For the first time in its long life the Grizzly Giant heard the sharp and prolonged cheer of

the college in the East; and then, a moment later, the echoes were awakened when the cheer for Dana's college was heartily given.

"Here the East and the West meet, don't they?" said John softly.

"They're both one," retorted Larcum, as, still looking eagerly about them, the boys began their return journey.

THE END

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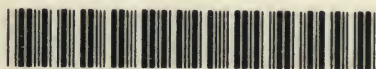
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